

On Judezmo Terms for the Proverb and Saying: A Look from Within*

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Lo-ké es la mas buena koza en el ben adam? La luenga! I lo-ké es la mas negra koza? La luenga! Máved vehayim beyad lashón (What is the finest thing man possesses? His tongue! And the worst thing? His tongue! Life and death are in the power of the tongue)

Rabbi David Ha-Lewi of Bucharest, 1860.¹

1. Terminology for Jewish folklore genres

Like many other Jewish subgroups forced to migrate from one region to another, the Jewish Ibero-Romance speakers who arrived in the Ottoman Empire following the late fifteenth-century expulsions from Iberia created a vibrant new folk culture in the realm of the sultans. Ottoman Sephardic folk culture arose as a synthesis of elements brought from Iberia, elements selectively incorporated from the cultures of the new ethnic groups with whom the Sephardim came into contact, and elements from the Jewish religious core culture which had been inherited from earlier generations, reaching back long before the Jews set foot on Iberian soil. What made the Ottoman Sephardic folk culture in its totality more than just the sum of these disparate parts was the unique creative spirit and philosophy of life that embodied this Jewish subculture group, and its distinctive filtering processes, by means of which all

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1 David Ha-Lewi, *Sefer tov wě-yafě*, Bucharest, f. 16a.

potential folklore elements ultimately adopted by the group became integral parts of its unified, internally cohesive cultural world.

The folklore traditions of the Jews of modern times—those of the Judezmo-speaking Sephardim, of the Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazim, of the Judeo-Arabic-speaking Maʿaravim and Mustʿarabim, and of other Jewish subcultures—began to receive scholarly scrutiny in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the birth of Jewish studies. But the orientation, methodology, and lines of development of research on the folklore of those diverse subcultures were not all of one kind. The most striking divergence is perhaps to be found in the analytical approach brought to the study of Yiddish folklore, on the one hand, and that assumed by many of the most prominent researchers of Judezmo folklore, especially those active in the twentieth century, on the other.

Among scholars interested in Yiddish folklore there were some, particularly the Austrian ethnographer and folklorist Friedrich S. Krauss (1859-1938), editor of *Am Ur-Quell* and *Anthropophyteia*, who argued that the folklore of Yiddish speakers should be analyzed as a component of German folkloristics. But this approach was ultimately rejected by the majority of Yiddish folklorists, most of whom themselves belonged to Jewish communities in Germany and Eastern Europe. While taking into consideration the medieval German roots of some elements of Yiddish folk traditions, these scholars sought to establish Yiddish or Jewish folkloristics as an independent field of inquiry, the aim of which was to study all facets of Jewish folklore, reflecting all of its diverse sources. The early Yiddish folklorists, such as Abraham Tendlau (b. Wiesbaden, 1802, d. 1878),² generally wrote in German. In 1898, Rabbi Max Grunwald (b. Zabrze, 1871, d. Jerusalem, 1953),³ who lived in Hamburg, Vienna, and Jerusalem, established a society for the study of Jewish folklore, with its own journal, *Mitteilungen (der Gesellschaft) für Jüdische Volkskunde*, which continued to appear through 1929.⁴ In their works in German, the early Yiddish folklorists tended to employ the folklore terminology commonly used by German scholars in analyzing Germanic folk traditions, such as *Redensart* ‘folk saying’, *Märchen* ‘fable’, and *Volksmärchen*

2 Tendlau authored *Sprichwörter und Redensarten deutsch-jüdischer Vorzeit*, Heinrich Keller, Frankfurt am Main 1860, and other pioneering Yiddish folklore collections.

3 On him see Dov Noy, “Dr. Max Grunwald—The Founder of Jewish Folkloristics”, in Max Grunwald, *Tales, Songs & Folkways of Sephardic Jews*, Dov Noy (ed.), Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1982, pp. ix-xiv.

4 The journal is available online: <http://www.compactmemory.de/>.

‘folktale’.⁵ But in the writings of later Yiddish folklorists, especially those who wrote in Yiddish, English, and other languages, the German folk-genre denotations were often abandoned in favor of the native terminology and internally generated technical neologisms, such as *vertl* ‘folk saying’, *moshl* ‘fable’, and *fólksmayse* ‘folktale’.⁶ From an examination of the Yiddish folkloristics literature one forms the impression that the texts which were of greatest interest to the Yiddish folklorists were those which, in form and content, were most characteristically ‘Jewish’, by which I mean rich in Hebrew-Aramaic lexical items and directly connected with distinctively Jewish religious and social life.

The study of Judezmo folklore started off on a somewhat different footing. The authors of some of the earliest collections of Ottoman Judezmo folk literature and their analysis were not members of the speech community itself, but Western European specialists in the literature and folk traditions of the Hispanic world. These scholars tended to see Ottoman Sephardic folklore through the prism of Hispanic folk traditions, and applied the terminology and categorizations accepted among scholars of those traditions to the folk culture of the Ottoman Sephardim. In choosing the specific genres of Sephardic folklore on which they chose to focus their attention, too, the European scholars were influenced by their school of research, investing almost all of their efforts in the investigation of genres which they recognized as having a historical connection to Western European, especially Hispanic, folklore traditions.

5 Cf. Max Grunwald, *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Jüdische Volkskunde* 1 (1898), pp. 46, 72.

6 Cf. Uriel Weinreich, *Modern English-Yiddish Yiddish-English Dictionary*, YIVO, New York 1968. See also the folklore terminology employed in Uriel Weinreich and Beatrice Weinreich, *Yiddish Language and Folklore: A Selective Bibliography for Research*, Mouton, The Hague 1959. Internally derived Yiddish folklore terms and genre categorization are presented in the handbook, *Voz iz azoyns yidische etnografye? (hantbikhil far zamler)* (What Is Jewish Ethnography? [Handbook for Collectors]), published by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York, in 1929 (esp. pp. 16-30). For discussion, see Beatrice Silverman-Weinreich, “Toward a Structural Analysis of Yiddish Proverbs”, *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 17 (1978), 1-20, and the following articles by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett: “Problemen fun yidisher folklor-terminologie”, *Yidische shprakh* 31 (1972), pp. 42-48; “Problems in the Early History of Jewish Folkloristics”, *World Congress of Jewish Studies* 10.D2 (1990), pp. 21-32; and “Folklore, Ethnography, and Anthropology”, *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Folklore_Ethnography_and_Anthropology).

The Hispanists essentially ignored those components of Ottoman Judezmo folklore adopted from the peoples of the Ottoman regions, alongside whom the Sephardim had lived since their arrival in the empire following the expulsions from Iberia, and they also paid little or no attention to elements of Judezmo folklore having specifically Hebrew or Jewish roots. To use the term introduced by sociologist William Graham Sumner (d. 1910), the approach followed by many of these scholars exemplified the ethnocentrism characteristic of their school and times, and ran counter to the fundamental anthropological principles guiding the contextual study of culture, or cultural relativism, later established by Franz Boas (d. 1942) and others.

The earliest Judezmo folk ballad to appear in a European scholarly journal was a single stanza included in the brief article “Los judíos españoles de Oriente: Lengua y literatura popular”, published in 1885 by Haim [Moshe] Bidjarano (1850-1931) in the *Boletín de la Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (Madrid).⁷ Rabbi Bidjarano, who in 1920 would be appointed chief rabbi of Turkey, was himself a native Judezmo speaker who enjoyed great prestige in the Jewish community. His knowledge of Judezmo folk traditions was also appreciated by Hispanists. In fact, he was appointed a corresponding member of the Real Academia de la Lengua Española, and sometimes used the Castilian name Enrique—ordinarily never used among Judezmo speakers in his time—instead of Hebrew-origin Haim. As was to become characteristic of most other Sephardim of the Levant who devoted themselves to Judezmo folklore documentation and research, in his pioneering publication Bidjarano revealed his acceptance of the folklore terminology and categorizations of the Hispanists with whom he was in contact as being applicable to Judezmo. For example, although the hero of the ballad the stanza of which he published in his article is known in its Judezmo variants primarily by names such as Don Argilis, Doverdjeli, Doverchile, or Underdjile,⁸ Bidjarano referred to the ballad as a “canto” concerning “Don Vergil”, thus bringing it under the Virgilios ballad type by which its Spanish analogues are known among Hispanists. Judezmo does not have an exact analogue to Spanish *canto*;

7 Vol. 9, pp. 23-27. I am pleased to thank Elena Romero and Aitor García Moreno for supplying me with a copy of this rare article.

8 E.g., see Moshe Attias, *Romancero sefaradi*, Jerusalem 1961, p. 72; Margaret Sleeman, “Estrea Aelion, Salonica Sephardic Tradition and the Ballad of Imprisoned Virgil”, in Philip E. Bennett and Richard Firth Green (eds.), *The Singer and the Scribe: European Ballad Traditions and European Ballad Cultures*, Rodopi, Amsterdam-New York 2004, pp. 153-168.

the closest words denoting types of ‘songs’ are *kante*, *kantar*, and *kantiga/-ika*.⁹ Rabbi Bidjarano also agreed with Hispanists of his time who classified the language of the Ottoman Sephardim as a kind of “jargon”; in an introductory letter at the beginning of his article addressed to the Spanish man of letters, Joaquín Costa (1846-1911), to whom the article was dedicated, Bidjarano wrote “Ya en otra ocasión, en la carta que vió la luz en el núm. 149 del *Boletín*, me lamenté de que el dialecto español en Oriente estuviese tan lejos de la verdad, que nos cuesta gran trabajo entendernos reciprocamente”.

Showing still greater acceptance of Hispanist terminology, subsequent folklore collectors who emerged from the Judezmo speech community, such as Abraham Danon (1857-1925) and Abraham Galante (1873-1961), referred to the Judezmo ballad genre by the term *romance*,¹⁰ the Modern Spanish word used by contemporaneous Hispanists—such as Antonio Sánchez Moguel,¹¹ Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo,¹² and Ramón Menéndez Pidal,¹³ who at the turn of the twentieth century took a great interest in the ballad tradition cultivated by the Sephardim of the Ottoman Empire—although Judezmo speakers generally refer to an epic song of this kind as a *romansa* (cf. Old Spanish *romança*) or *romanso*.¹⁴ The same deference to the terminology of the prestigious European Hispanists was later to be seen in the use by scholars from the Judezmo speech community, such as Alberto Hemsí (1898-1975), of the Spanish term *copla* for the rhymed verse genre more commonly known among Judezmo speakers as

9 Joseph Nehama, *Dictionnaire du judéo-espagnol*. CSIC, Madrid 1977, pp. 266-267.

10 E.g., Abraham Danon, “Recueil de romances judéo-espagnoles chantées en Turquie”, *Revue des Études Juives* 32 (1896-97), pp. 102-123, 263-275; 33, pp. 122-139, 255-268; Abraham Galante, “Quatorze romances judéo-espagnols”, *Revue Hispanique* 10 (1903), pp. 594-606.

11 E.g., A. Sánchez Moguel, “Un romance en el dialecto de los judíos de Oriente”, *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 16 (1890), pp. 497-509

12 E.g., M. Menéndez y Pelayo, “Romances castellanos tradicionales entre los judíos de Levante”, *Antología de poetas líricos castellanos* 10, nos. 45-56 (Madrid 1900), pp. 303-357.

13 E.g., Ramón Menéndez Pidal, “Catálogo del romancero judeo-español”, *Cultura española* no. 4 (1906), pp. 1045-1077; no. 5 (1907), pp. 161-199.

14 E.g., see Nehama, *Dictionnaire du judéo-espagnol* (Note 9), p. 483 s. *romansa*; and the texts reproduced in Samuel G. Armistead and Joseph H. Silverman, *The Judeo-Spanish Ballad Chapbooks of Jacob Abraham Yoná*, University of California, Berkeley 1971, pp. 389, 419.

komplā;¹⁵ and the use by Moshe Attias (1898-1973) and others of Castilian *cancionero* for a ‘collection of songs’, where Judezmo has no such word.¹⁶

Following the late nineteenth-century beginnings of the ‘Hispanist school’ of Ottoman Sephardic folklore research, its orientation, terminology, and methodology tended to be adopted, consciously or unconsciously, by most subsequent Ottoman Sephardic folklore scholars, particularly those who were native speakers of Spanish. In doing so these scholars rejected the community’s own folklore lexicon and genre categorizations, often without even raising as a methodological problem the discrepancy between the terminology they preferred and that used by the community whose folklore they were studying.

Few scholars have departed from this strictly Hispanic-oriented ethnocentrism. One was Baruch ‘Uzi’el, who immigrated to Israel from Salonika and in 1927 began to contribute pioneering articles on Judezmo folklore to the Hebrew-language Jewish folklore journal *Rēšumot*, founded by H. N. Bialik, A. Druyanov, and H. Ravnitski, and other periodicals.¹⁷ Preferring the native Judezmo terminology to that of the Hispanists, ‘Uzi’el employed *konsežas* and *maasiyod* for various types of folktales and rabbinical legends,¹⁸ *ečas de Djohá* for the tales involving the folk hero Djoha, *romansas* to denote the traditional ballads, *komplas (de purim, del felek, etc.)* to designate the rhymed strophes on Jewish themes, *kantigas (de novya, de parida, etc.)* for the lyric songs (sung to brides, new mothers, etc.), and *širé kodeš* and *pizmonim* for various religious song genres.¹⁹

15 E.g., Alberto Hemsí, *Coplas sefardies*, Alexandria 1932.

16 E.g., Moshe Attias, *Cancionero judeo-español*, Jerusalem 1972.

17 ‘Uzi’el’s collected works have been published as *Min hafolklor el hasifrut bi-yhudit-sēfaradit (ladino)*, in Shmuel Refael (ed.), Hamaxon lē-ḥequer Yahadut Saloniki, Tel Aviv 1988.

18 Baruch ‘Uzi’el, “*Ha-folklor šel ha-yēhudim ha-sēfaradim*”, *Rēšumot* 5 (1927), pp. 332, 334. Citations here transcribed in romanization from Hebrew-letter Judezmo sources are presented in italics. The vocalization in the romanizations is based on the Judezmo dialects of the major cities, such as Salonika, Istanbul and Izmir. Note the phonetic values of the following special characters: *ch* = [č], *d* = [d], *ḏ* (denoting *dalet* unmarked by a diacritic or syllable-final *taw*) = [ð] and *ḏ̣* (denoting *dalet* marked by a diacritic) = [ð̣] (in the dialects in which this sound occurs, otherwise = [d]), *dj* = [ǰ], *g* = [g], *g̣* = [ɣ] (in dialects in which this sound occurs, otherwise = [g]), *h* = [x], *j* = [ž], *s* = [s], *sh* = [š], *u* = [u] or, when functioning as a glide adjacent to a vowel, [w], *v* = [v], *z* = [z]. Stress is ordinarily penultimate in words ending in a vowel or *-n* or *-s*, and ultimate in words ending in other consonants; irregular stress is marked with an acute accent over the stressed syllable.

19 See ‘Uzi’el, “*Ha-folklor šel hayēhudim hasēfaradim*” (Note 18), pp. 359, 363 and 368, 375, 395.

Another such scholar is Tamar Alexander-Frizer. Whether documenting and exploring the Judezmo folktale (Alexander-Frizer 1999, Alexander 2008a), the proverb (Alexander 2004, Alexander-Frizer & Bentolila 2008b), healing incantations,²⁰ or other genres of Judezmo folk literature, Alexander-Frizer, and those younger scholars whose work she has influenced, have always taken into consideration the myriad sources of the Sephardic texts, and the culture bearers' own perceptions of them.

2. Native qualifications of the Judezmo proverb and proverbial saying

One of the folklore genres highly appreciated by Judezmo speakers throughout the ages, and one which still plays a prominent role in their everyday conversational as well as written language, is that of the proverb and saying. By these terms I mean short, pithy statements in widespread use among members of the culture, generally of anonymous authorship. Stating a general truth or practical precept, or offering wise advice, the succinctness of the proverb and saying makes them easy to remember, and convenient to insert at opportune moments. Yehuda Hatsvi, a native of Salonika living in Israel, offered the following remarks on the use of proverbs and sayings among Judezmo speakers:

<“... entre los sefaradim en todos los niveles de edukasion o intelijensia, uzar los refranes era una parte integral de los moabetes i de las konversaciones, i en las derashot en las kehilot ... Los refranes eran tan konosidos por el puevlo, ke ni se nesositava sitar el refran entero mientras avlando. Basta de pronunsiar una sola parte del refran; porke todos konosian la segunda parte del refran... Dunke, el refran era (i pekado ke ya no es mas) komo una “palavra dizidera” ke se kulaneava en kada nada. En la kreensia del puevlo, “refran mentirozo no ay”, i el refran era komo la esensia de una saviduria kolektiva”.>.²¹

“... among the Sephardim of all levels of education and intelligence, using proverbs was an integral part of chats and conversation, and sermons in the

20 E.g., Tamar Alexander and Eliezer Papo, “On the Power of the Word: Healing Incantations of Bosnian Sephardic Women”, *Menorah 2* (Belgrade 2011), pp. 57-117.

21 Personal communication from Yehuda Hatsvi dated 30 April 2012, for which warm thanks are hereby expressed. Textual citations originally appearing in the Roman alphabet are here enclosed within angular <> brackets.

synagogue. The proverbs were so well known by the people that it was not even necessary to cite a proverb in its entirety while speaking. It was sufficient to say just a part of it; because everyone knew the rest ... Thus the proverb was (but, unfortunately, no longer is) like a “wise word” that was used at every opportunity. The popular belief is that “There is no false proverb”, and the proverb captures the essence of a collective wisdom”.

Among Judezmo speakers, the ‘Jewish’ or ‘Sephardic’ quality of the proverbs and sayings in common use by the speech group is sometimes alluded to by referring to them as *refranes djidyós* (Jewish proverbs)²² or <refrán sefaradí> (Sephardic proverb).²³

Although in fact widely used by men, women, and children, the Judezmo speech community—especially its males—tend to attribute the use of proverbs and sayings to women in particular. In a fictional dialogue from turn of the twentieth-century Izmir, for example, a Europeanized Sephardi is portrayed as congratulating a friend on a forthcoming joyous event by means of a French expression probably learned in school; but then smiling and changing his tone, he adds familiar sayings in Judezmo, ‘as the women say’:

*Rishar: Anfén, bonjur, e me felisitasyón osí!*²⁴ [Trokando de tono i sonriendo] *Para munchos anyos, komo dizen las mujeres, ugurlía i bereketlía! Alberto: Mersí.*²⁵

“Richard: And so, good day, and my best wishes too! (*Changing his tone and smiling*) For many years to come, as the women say, with luck and plenty!

Alberto: I thank you”.

When the earliest substantial collection of proverbs began to appear in the Judezmo press at the turn of the twentieth century, it was entitled “*Refranes de mujeres*” (Womens’ Proverbs).²⁶ Around the same time, in connection with their reactions to

22 *El Rizón* 12, no. 12 (Salonika 1937).

23 Yehuda Hatsvi, 5 February 2012, <http://www.esefarad.com/?p=30707>.

24 Fr. *Enfin, bonjour, et mes félicitations aussi!*

25 ‘Alexander’ (=Gavri’el) Benghiatt, *El Trezoro de Yerushaláyim*, Jerusalem 1901, pp. 145-152 (republished from the Izmir Judezmo periodical *El Meseret*).

26 *El Trezoro de Yerushaláyim* 1, Jerusalem 1901, pp. 135-136, 143-144, 160, 176, 182-184, 192; the collection is reproduced in romanization in David M. Bunis, “Una introducción a la lengua de los sefardíes a través de refranes en judezmo”, in *Neue Romania* 12 = *Judenspanisch* 1 (1992), ed. Winfried Busse, pp. 7-36.

a certain popular newspaper series, historian Abraham Galante made the following comparison between Judezmo-speaking women of the older, culturally more traditional—and often illiterate—generation in the Ottoman regions, and their younger, more westernized and highly literate counterparts:

*En la mujer apartenyendo a la vyeja djenerasyon, ... eya komenta según su pensar, i según saver lo ke eya sintyó meldar, i adjunta en vezes algún reflán o alguna ekspresyón endjenyoza. En la lektrisa de la nueva djenerasyon, egziste el plazer de meldar i remeldar ..., de komentar las ekspresyones djudías, sin abordar akeyas turkas i gregas.*²⁷

“In the woman belonging to the older generation, ... she comments according to how she thinks, and based on her knowledge of what she has heard [someone else] read to her, and sometimes she adds some proverb or ingenuous expression [of her own]. In the woman reader of the newer generation, there is the pleasure of reading and re-reading [the series installment herself], ... commenting on the Jewish expressions, without touching on those of Turkish and Greek origin”.

In the Judezmo press one notes numerous other instances in which the use of proverbs and sayings is ascribed to ‘(Jewish) women’, for example:

“Las mujeres djudías dizen ke ‘Enverano es kolcha de prove’” “The Jewish women say that ‘Summer is the blanket of the poor’” (*El Djujetón* 5, no. 16 [Istanbul 1913], p. 4).

“Las mujeres dizen ‘Enverano tyene ojos’: no es komo envyerno, ke todo está tapado i nađa no se ve” “The women say ‘Summer has eyes’: it is not like winter, when everything is covered up [by clothing] and nothing is seen” (*El Djujetón* 6, no. 50 [1914], p. 5).

“Las mujeres uzan a dezir un proverbyo: ‘Lo·ke se uza non se eskuza’” “The women are accustomed to saying a proverb: ‘What is customary cannot be abandoned’” (*El Punchón* 2, no. 74 [Salonika 1924], p. 3).

“Esto es lo·ke²⁸ dizen las mujeres: ‘Mazal de perro’” “This is what the women call ‘A dog’s luck’” (*El Djujetón* 21, no. 20 [1929], p. 5).

27 Abraham Galante, *El Meseret* 8, no. 20 (Izmir 1904), p. 4.

28 A middle dot (·) will be used to separate words which are written separately in modern Judezmo but appear as a single word in the cited text.

In a satirical series published in Salonika between the world wars, a cantankerous old husband accuses his wife of constantly peppering her conversation with proverbs; she answers by arguing that there is no other way of making her meaning clear to him:

BOHOR: Ke vamos akomer oy?

DJAMILA: Lo-ke trushites. Non saves lo ke dizen, “Komed kon dos lo-ke trayesh kon vos”?

BOHOR: En kada palavra metes un refrán.

*DJAMILA: Otra manera se puede dar a entender kon ti?*²⁹

“BOHOR: What are we going to eat today?”

DJAMILA: Whatever you brought. Don’t you know what they say? “Eat, you two, what you bring with you!”

BOHOR: You never say a sentence without adding a proverb.

DJAMILA: Is there any other way to make myself understood by you?”

In a brief overview of the folklore genres cultivated by Judezmo speakers, Dora Niyego offered the following comments on the proverb and saying, at the same time citing some of the native terms used today to denote them:

<“Los proverbos sepharadis ke pasaron de boka en boka son muy presiozos porke kontienen mucho saverisyo en pokas palavras. Los sepharadis dizen “refraniko mintirozo no ay”. Muchos de estos refranes son vinidos de la Espanya. Podemos sitar unos kuantos “Ken mas tiene, mas kere”, “Mas vale un pasharo en la mano, ke sien bolando”, “Ken bien te kere, te aze yorar”.

Ay otros proverbos i dichas ke entraron al judeo-espanyol de los puevlos ke tuvieron relasyones kon los Sepharadis. Por egzemplo, los Sepharadis de Romania utilizan el proverbio “Azete amigo kon el guerko, fin ke pasas el ponte”. De las dichas ebreas, la maksima rabinika ke es sitada en Pirke Avot “Si no yo para mi, ken para mi?” es muy konosida. Ay refranes ke tienen komo sujetos los uzos i kostumbres de los Sepharadis. Todos konosemos la dicha “Duspues de Purim, platikos”.>³⁰

“The Sephardic proverbs which passed by word of mouth are very precious because they contain much wisdom in a few words. The Sephardim say ‘There is

²⁹ *Mesajero* 5, no. 1557 (Salonika 1940).

³⁰ *Şalom gazetesi*, 9 January 2008 (<http://www.salom.com.tr/news/print/3447-La-kultura-popular-de-los-Sepharadis.aspx>).

no false proverb'. Many of these proverbs came from Spain. We can cite a few: 'The more one has, the more one wants', 'A bird in hand is worth more than 100 in flight', 'One who loves you makes you cry'.

"There are other proverbs and sayings which entered Judeo-Spanish through the peoples with whom the Sephardim interacted. For example, the Sephardim of Romania use the proverb 'Make friends with the devil, until you cross the bridge'. Of the Hebrew sayings, the rabbinic maxim cited in Ethics of the Fathers, 'If I am not for myself, who will be for me?', is very well known. There are proverbs that have as their subjects Sephardic habits and customs. We all know the saying 'After Purim, little plates [of food given as gifts are an anti-climax]'".

Matilda Koen-Sarano contributed the following remarks on the categorization of the Judezmo proverb and saying:

<"Munchos i mas grandes de mi en este kampo krearon kategorias, komo Alkalay, Perahya, Kolonomos i Gaon. Otros los dieron en orden alfabetiko, komo Saporta y Beja i Moscona. Ay ken dio solo reflanes, komo Gaon. Ay i ken metio adientro dichas, komo Moscona. Ay ken metio adientro de todo, komo Perahya. Mi tendencia es de divizarlos en kategorias: reflanes, dichas, bindisiones i maldisiones, ekspresiones verbales i mas. Todos estos apartienen al mundo del reflan, mizmo si no lo son">.³¹

"Many [scholars], greater than me in this field, created [typological] categories, such as [Arye] Alkalay, [Klara] Perahya, [Žamila] Kolonomos i [Moshe David] Gaon. Others, such as [Enrique] Saporta y Beja and [Isaac] Moscona, gave them in alphabetical order. Some, such as Perahya, put sayings of all kinds in their collections. My tendency is to divide them into [the following] categories: <reflanes> [proverbs], <dichas> [sayings], <bindisiones> [blessings] and <maldisiones> [curses], verbal expressions and more. All of these belong to the world of the proverb, even if they are not such".

As in the collection *Erensya Sefaradi*, collected and edited in Istanbul, 1994, by Klara Perahya and other women,³² Niyego and Koen-Sarano distinguish primarily between

31 Matilda Koen-Sarano. "El reflan djudeo-espanyol: Espejo de las komunitas sefaradis", *Aki Yerushalayim* 75 (2004), http://www.aki-yerushalayim.co.il/ay/075/075_08_reflan.htm

32 Klara Perahya et al. (eds.), *Erensya Sefaradi (Proverbos i Diças)*, Gözlem, Istanbul 1994.

two principal sub-genres, the proverb—for which they use the seemingly synonymous terms *proverbo*, *refrán/reflán*, and diminutive *refraniko*, and the saying—denoted by *dicha* and *maksima*. Koen-Sarano adds additional categories. In fact, the terms cited by these authors are but a few of those which have been used by Judezmo speakers and by the scholars who have attempted to analyze their folk culture. The following paragraphs offer a critical look at the scholarly and popular terminology used to denote the Judezmo proverb and saying.

3. External ('scientific' or 'scholarly') terminology

In his 1885 article cited above, Haim Bidjarano also included 155 Judezmo proverbs and sayings;³³ a much larger collection he had compiled still remains in manuscript. Again conforming to the terminology accepted among Hispanists, Bidjarano referred to his proverbs and sayings as *proverbios*, *máximas*, and *refranes*. The first scholar to publish a major collection of Judezmo proverbs as collected from native speakers was Rabbi Meyer Kayserling (1829-1905), who in Budapest, in 1889, published a small volume entitled *Refranes o proverbios españoles*. As its title demonstrates, Kayserling, too, used the two terms most widely employed by Hispanists in denoting examples of this genre: *refrán* and *proverbio*. His collection was soon followed by that of the French Hispanist, Raymond Foulché-Delbosc (1864-1929), who employed similar terminology in his article “Proverbes judéo-espagnols”, published in 1895 in the *Revue Hispanique* (vol. 2, pp. 312-352). So, too, did folklore collectors from the Judezmo speech community itself, who adopted the Hispanists' terminology, or their equivalents in various European languages, in collections which, together, were to establish a rich paremiological data base.³⁴

33 Haim [Moshe] Bidjarano, “Judíos españoles de Oriente”, *Boletín de la Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (1885), pp. 26-27.

34 The early proverb collections by Judezmo-speaking scholars included: A. Moscuna, “Spaniolische Sprichwörter (aus Tatar-Bazardzyk in Ost Rumelien)”, *Der Urquell* 1 (1897), pp. 84-86, 204-205; Joseph Passy, “Spaniolische Sprichwörter aus Philippopel”, *Der Urquell* 1 (1897), pp. 205-206; Abraham Galante, “Proverbes judéo-espagnols”, *Revue Hispanique* 9 (1902), pp. 440-454; Abraham Danon, “Proverbes judéo-espagnols de Turquie”, *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 27 (1903), pp. 72-96.

In one of the most recent works devoted to the subject,³⁵ the Judezmo proverb repertoire is referred to as *refranero sefardí*, although in Judezmo *refranero* traditionally denotes a ‘frequent user of proverbs’ rather than a ‘collection of proverbs’, as in Spanish.³⁶ The work’s Spanish author characteristically refers to the proverb traditions of Judezmo speakers as “una pieza clave en la evolución cultural *española*” (emphasis mine). The author concedes that “nuevas voces [...] fueron incorporándose a este español singular debido a las influencias recibidas por las distintas comunidades sefardíes”, although he felt no need to specify any of the sources of those ‘influencias recibidas’; nor did he make any mention of the fact that numerous proverbs and expressions were original creations arising within the speech group, and some others were translations or adaptations of Hebrew and Aramaic antecedents.

In prefaces to their proverb collections and analysis, Tamar Alexander Frizer,³⁷ and her predecessor, Isaac Jack Lévy,³⁸ devoted considerable attention to the terminology used by scholars to distinguish between various types of proverbs and sayings. Lévy in particular discussed the popular and scientific terms used by speakers of Castilian to denote types of proverbs and sayings. But, perhaps because of their literary-folkloristic rather than linguistic orientation, neither of them analyzed the internal proverb and saying terminology used by Judezmo speakers themselves. As a complement to the paremiological scholarship of Alexander Frizer and her colleagues, the remainder of this article will be devoted to an examination of the Judezmo lexicon for the proverb and saying, on its own terms and in comparison with the terminology used by Hispanists, in order to focus attention on this tradition as viewed ‘from within’.³⁹

35 Jesús Cantera Ortiz de Urbina, *Diccionario Akal del refranero sefardí*, Ediciones AKAL, Madrid 2004.

36 See, for example, Nehama, *Dictionnaire du judéo-espagnol* (Note 9), p. 469.

37 Tamar Alexander, *Words Are Better Than Bread*, Ben-Gurion University Press and Ben-Zvi Institute, Beer Sheva and Jerusalem 2004, esp. pp. 17-19, 20-22, 25.

38 Isaac Jack Lévy, *Prolegomena to the Study of the Refranero Sefardí*, Las Americas, New York 1969.

39 A few basic works on the proverb genre include: Archer Taylor, *The Proverb*, Peter Lang, Bern 1985; Wolfgang Mieder and Alan Dundes, *The Wisdom of Many: Essays on the Proverb*, University of Wisconsin Press, Garland, Madison 1994; Wolfgang Mieder, *International Proverb Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliography*, Garland, New York 1982-2001; Wolfgang Mieder, *Proverbs: A Handbook*, Greenwood Press, Santa Barbara, CA. 2004.

4. Internal ('native', 'folk', or 'popular') terminology

In accordance with the distinction made by Perahya et al., Koen-Sarano, Dora Niyego, and other researchers belonging to the contemporary Judezmo speech community, the following discussion will be subdivided into sections dealing with the proverb, and the saying.

4.1 PROVERB

4.1.1 *Proverbyo, proverb*

In the sixteenth century, the term *proverbyo* (or *proberbyo*, פֶּרוֹבֵּירְבּוֹ, cf. Sp. *proverbio* <Lat. *proverbium*) appears in Moshe Almosnino's philosophical treatise, *Hanhagat ha-ḥayyim ... Rejimyento de-la vida* (Salonika 1564). Almosnino used the term—and only this term—to designate both well-established popular sayings, and popular sayings supposedly derived from legal sources or Talmudic dicta, which served in his community as pithy maxims, usually of a metaphorical nature:

“... *el proverbyo antigo ... dize ‘Kyen es tu enemigo, el ke es de tu ofisio’* “... the old proverb ... says ‘Who is your enemy? He who is of your same profession’” (Almosnino 1564, 111a).⁴⁰

“*traen un proverbyo antigo en nuestro talmud ke dize ke esto es lo-ke los ombres komún mente dizen ke ‘Asegún es el game(l)yo, así es la karga’*”⁴¹ “they bring an old proverb in our Talmud which is like that which people commonly say, that ‘According to the [capability] of the camel, such is the weight [he is able to carry]’” (Almosnino 1564, 72b).

It must be noted, however, that Moshe Almosnino was a member of a small elitist group of intellectuals in Salonika, some of whom were linguistically de-judaized *conversos* who had returned to Judaism there. His work was written in a variety of language which evidently exemplified the style used by this elite group, which,

40 For lack of space I am forced to do what would be unthinkable in serious folkloristic research: I list proverbs without offering any context. I hope to rectify this error in an expanded version of the present article.

41 In the margin of Almosnino's text he offers the Hebrew equivalent of the proverb, לְפָנָם גַּמְלָא שִׁחֲנָא, which is attributed to Rabbi Yishma'el (Talmud Bavli, Massekhet Soṭa, Perek 1, f. 13b).

unlike the everyday Judezmo speakers of more humble origins in contemporaneous Salonika, tended to look toward contemporaneous literary Spanish as its linguistic model. Members of this elitist group tended to refer to their language as *romançe* (רומאנסי), whereas the name appearing in sixteenth-century works more closely resembling the variety of language used by the popular sector of Ottoman Sephardim was *ladino* (לאדינו).⁴²

A parallel to this terminological divergence is to be seen in the traditional Jewish calque Ladino versus former *converso* ‘Spanish’ translations of the Hebrew word משלי (*mišle*, the construct plural of משל [*mašal*] ‘exemplum, parable, proverb’),⁴³ in the opening sentence of the Book of Proverbs. From the sixteenth century into the modern era, the traditional Ladino calque translations published by the Jews of the Ottoman Empire translate *mišle* as *enshen-/enshemplos*.⁴⁴ This is similar to the form <ensienplos> appearing in the fifteenth-century Bible translation, often known as the Biblia de la Casa de Alba, directed by Rabbi Moshe Arragel of Maqueda, and to the form <enxenplos> offered in the fifteenth-century Hispanic translation known as the Biblia Escorial or E3, which follows the Hebrew canon.⁴⁵ The Judezmo term may be

42 E.g., *Livro (l)yamado en lashón hakódesh shulhán (h)apanim i en lađino meza de el alma* ‘Book Called in the Language of Holiness [=Hebrew] Table of Showbread and in Ladino Table of the Soul’, Salonika 1568, title page.

43 *Mišle* is the first word of the phrase משלי שלמה בן-דוד מלך ישראל (*Mišle Šəlomo ben Dawid melex Yisra’el*) “The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel”, with which Proverbs begins.

44 E.g., the translation published in Salonika 1572 (the text is reproduced, without vocalization, in Moshe Lazar (ed.), *The Ladino Scriptures: Constantinople – Salonica [1540-1572]*, Labyrinthos, Lancaster, CA 2000, vol. 2) and in that in Yisra’el Bëxar Həyyim (ed.), *Sefer arba’a wē-esrim ... həleq rēvī’i ... kēṭuvim ‘im ... targum ladino*, Vienna 1816.

45 The Latin Vulgate instead offers *parabola*. It should be noted that, from the sixteenth century on, Judezmo *enshemplo* was used primarily in the sense of ‘example, parable, exemplum’, e.g., “*Deprende a-leer turkesko i farsi i a (h)azer koplaz a-metro i trovas i kantos i adevinasyones aguda* i *enshenplos maravi(l)yo*zoz” “Learn to read Turkish and Persian and to compose couplets in meter and verses and songs and sharp riddles and marvelous proverbs” (Baḥye ben Yosef ibn Paquda, *Hovav halēvavot ... en lađino*, Yosef Formón (trans.), Salonika c1568, 2:67a). See also Nehama, *Dictionnaire du judéo-espagnol* (Note 9), p. 177; and the analysis of the use of *enshemplo* in Almuth Münch, “Šəlomo ben Ya‘aqov Hakohen: *Hēseq Šəlomo (Me‘am Yo‘ez, Qohelet)*, Yerušalayim 1893: Aspectos retórico-poetológicos de la obra”, in David M. Bunis, *Languages and Literatures of Sephardic and Oriental Jews*, Misgav Yerushalayim & Mossad Bialik, Jerusalem 2009, pp. *319-340.

compared with Old Spanish *enxemplo*, from Latin *exēplum*, which was one of the terms for ‘proverb’ or ‘saying’ used before the word *proverbio* became popular.⁴⁶

However, similar to Almosnino’s terminology for the ‘proverb’, the 1553 Ferrara Bible, published by former *conversos* in a variety of language differing in important respects from the traditional Jewish Ladino calque translation language, instead uses <parabolas o prouerbios> in the title, and <prouerbios> in the text itself.⁴⁷ The latter word is also used in most of the pre-Expulsion non-Jewish Hispanic translations: E8/E6 (13th c.), GE (13th c.), E5/E7 (copied fifteenth c.), EV (copied fifteenth c.), E4 (copied fifteenth c.),⁴⁸ as in the Christian Spanish Bible translations published from the sixteenth century on.⁴⁹ In Almosnino’s *Hanhagat ha-ḥayyim*, the Book of Proverbs is itself called *Proverbyos* (1564, 123b), while in Judezmo works in more traditional language from that and later periods, Hebrew-origin *Mishlé* is used instead,⁵⁰ for example:

“...*el rey de los savyos disho en Mishlé ke ‘La mujer savia fragua su kaza, i ke la loka kon su mano la deroka’* “... the king of the wise men said in Proverbs that ‘The wise woman builds her house, and the insane one with her own hand destroys it’” (“Atias, *La guerta de oro*, 1778, p. 54b).⁵¹

Following the sixteenth century, *proverbyo* does not seem to appear in Judezmo texts until the late eighteenth century, offering support for my hypothesis that it did

46 Joan Corominas and José A. Pascual, *Diccionario crítico etimológico castellano e hispánico*, Gredos, Madrid, vol. 2 (1984), p. 548, s. *ejemplo*, and p. 939, s. *fracción (refrán)*.

47 *Biblia en lengua española*, Ferrara 1553, p. 31.

48 In BNM, <prouerbios> is used in the title, and <[e]xemplos> in the translation of *mišle* in Proverbs 1:1 itself. For the exact forms in the pre-Expulsion texts, see <http://corpus.bibliamedieval.es/>.

49 E.g., the Casiodoro de Reina edition published in Basel, 1569 (<prouerbios>), and the Reina-Valera 1995 edition (*Santa Biblia: Antiguo y Nuevo Testamento*, Sociedades Bíblicas Unidas, n.p.: 1995) (<proverbios>).

50 For examples of the use of Hebrew-origin *Mishlé* in Modern Judezmo see David M. Bunis, *A Lexicon of the Hebrew and Aramaic Elements in Modern Judezmo*, Magnes Press, Jerusalem 1993, no. 2727.

51 On this proverb see Tamar Alexander “‘Cast Thy Bread Upon the Waters’: Between Sephardic Proverbs and the Hebrew Canonic Source”, in David M. Bunis (ed.), *Languages and Literatures of Sephardic and Oriental Jews*, Misgav Yerushalayim & Mossad Bialik, Jerusalem 2009, *284-285.

not originally constitute a part of everyday popular Ottoman Judezmo. At the end of the eighteenth century we suddenly find the word in *La guerta de oro* (Livorno 1788), by David Bëxar Moshe ʿAtias, where it appears in the phrase “*Proverbyos o sean refranin*”, serving as the title placed over a column of Judezmo translations of Italian proverbs, themselves headed “Proverbi” (f. [ii]a). ʿAtias—who was born in Sarajevo but had established himself in Livorno—knew Italian and was familiar with and influenced by Western European literary terms and concepts, presumably used *proverbyos* under Italian influence (cf. It. *proverbio*), but felt the need to explain its meaning for the everyday, unwesternized Judezmo reader, unacquainted with Italian, by means of another, apparently more familiar term for ‘proverb’ used in popular Judezmo, *refrán*. Over a century later, Dani’el Balansí of Izmir, who translated the Thousand and One Nights into Judezmo, used a variant of the same word to explain *proverbyo*, suggesting that the word had still not become an integral part of Judezmo:

“*El fue enganyado i el se repentía agora de averse kreído tan presto a las palabras de este indyano. Ma, era tadre! Komo dizen un proverbyo (reflán) en turko, ‘Son pishmán, faydá etméz’, ‘Después ke akontese una dezgrasya, repentirse no aze ningún provecho’*” “He had been deceived and now he regretted having believed so quickly the words of this Indian. But it was too late! As they say in a Turkish exemplum (proverb), ‘After a mishap occurs, regretting what might have been does no good’” (Dani’el Balansí [trans.], *Los mas enteresantes kuentos de-la ermoza estorya de mil i una noche*, Izmir 1913, p. 31).⁵²

We will return to the term *refrán/reflán* in section 4.1.2.1 below. Of ʿAtias’ translations or adaptations of the Italian proverbs into Judezmo ‘as we [speak it]’ (or in the words of ʿAtias, “*syertos lakirdís i refranin deklarados palavra por palavra komo nos otros*” ‘certain conversations and proverbs explained word for word as we [speak them]’, f. 11a), one of them actually seems to be a Judezmo proverb preceded by an Italian translation:

[Italian:] <“Avanti che t’ammogli, guarda quel che fai”> [= Judezmo:] “*Antes ke te kazes, mira lo ke azes*” “‘Before you marry, watch what you’re doing’” (ʿAtias, *La guerta de oro*, p. 13a).

The appearance of *proverbyo* became more frequent in Judezmo publications in the second half of the nineteenth century when, with the beginnings of the Europeanization

52 Cf. Tk. *Son pişmanlık fayda etmez*. “It is too late for repentance”.

of the ethnic groups of the Ottoman Empire—including its Jews—the folklore terminology used in the modern languages of Europe, especially in Italian (*proverbio*) and French (*proverbe*), were adopted in more popular Judezmo throughout the Ottoman regions and beyond. Primarily after the publication in European academic journals of Judezmo proverb collections, with which the Judezmo authors might have been familiar, the form *proverbyo*, reflecting Italian or Spanish, began to enjoy popularity in the European-influenced Judezmo press and popular literature with reference to proverbial sayings in Judezmo, Hebrew, Turkish, and other language.⁵³ Examples of its use include:

“... *asigún el proverbyo ‘En midrásh beló hidush’*,⁵⁴ *ansí no ay estanpar koza sin renovar*” “... just as the proverb says ‘There is no treating of a subject without disclosing something new,’ so there is no publishing of a book without some innovation” (Moshe David Alkalay, *Hinnux lěšon ʿivri*, Belgrade 1871, [iv]a).

“*La mujer en el proverbyo, i el libro para reir*” “Women in the proverb, and the book for laughing” (=title of an anonymous anthology of proverbs, jokes and humorous stories published in Ruse in 1893). “*Proverbyos en versos ebráikos*” (Proverbs in rhymed Hebrew) (*El Trezoro de Yerushaláyim* 1 [Jerusalem 1901], p. 64).⁵⁵

“*La okazyón aze al ombre ladrón’, dize un proverbyo*” “‘Opportunity makes a man a thief,’ says a proverb” (*El Meseret* 8, no. 24 [Izmir 1904], p. 5).

“*Proverbyos espanyoles; Proverbyos turkos*” (Yaʿaqov Avraham Yona, *Romansos*, Salonika, before 1909, pp. 7-11 [104 proverbs]; pp. 11-13 [46 proverbs]).⁵⁶

“*Yo no entendí byen este proverbyo ke disho mi papú i le rojí de esplikarme*” “I hardly understood this proverb which my grandfather used, and I asked him

53 See also the entries in Nehama, *Dictionnaire du judéo-espagnol* (Note 9), p. 454; Klara Perahya et al., *Diksyonaryo Judeo Espanyol*, Gözlem, Istanbul 1997, p. 184.

54 Heb. אין מדרש בלא חידוש.

55 This collection, with linguistic comments, is reproduced in Bunis, “Una introdución a la lengua” (Note 26).

56 The text is reproduced in Armistead and Silverman, *Judeo-Spanish Ballad Chapbooks* (Note 14), pp. 462-468. It should be noted that, on the title page, the same proverbs are depicted as “*refranes ... en espanyol i en turko*”. For a study of the proverbs published by Yona, see Leonor Carracedo and Elena Romero, “Refranes publicados por Yaʿacob A. Yoná (edición concordada) y bibliografía del refranero sefardí”, *Sefarad* 41 (1981), pp. 389-560.

to explain it” (*El Djujetón* 1 [Istanbul 1909], p. 313). “*Eyos se ulvidan del proverbyo ke dize: ‘O kadar pará, o kadar boyá’*” (*Este karar de parás por este karar de boyá*) “They forget the proverb that says: ‘That amount of money [buys] that amount of paint’” (*El Martío* 1, no. 3 [Salonika 1914], p. 2).

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Judezmo variant *proverbo* became popular as well, especially among westernized speakers. This form derives from French *proverbe*, with final *-e* in masculine nouns replaced by *-o*, as is the rule in the incorporation of Gallicisms into Judezmo (e.g., Fr. *élève* > Jud. *elevo* ‘pupil [esp. in a secular-oriented school]’); for example:

“*No se avía araygado byen este proverbo befi aberiyod*” “This proverb had not become deeply rooted in popular speech” (Y. Y. D. Abba, *Sefer lehem Yē’uda*, Izmir 1891, p. 95a).

Tu entenderás en las profetas lo ke es dicho kon alegoria (remez), lo ke es en figuraḏo (medjáz) i en proverbos “You will understand in the Prophets what is said allegorically, what is figurative (metaphoric) and what in the form of proverbs” (H. B. Arye, *Kestyón djudía: Estudyos*, vol. 1, Sofia 1900, p. 10).

“*El proverbo dize, ‘Un loko kita syento’, un rashá, un masid umadíah kita mil*” “The proverb says, ‘One crazy person is enough to make a hundred others crazy’, and one villain—one instigator and seducer—is enough to incite a thousand to evil” (*El Djujetón* 1 [1909], p. 2).

“*Esta semana tyene ke venir el haham ... nuevamente engajaḏo por la komuniḏad de Kirkliḡya... Arian muy bueno akeos ke no partisipavan a-las orasyones mesmo en shabaḏ i profitar de-la okazyón de-las fyestas, komo dize el proverbo, ‘Sheytanín ayagí kirmak’ i azersen djuḏyós fin alkavo*” “This week the rabbi ... just hired by the community of Kirkkilise is scheduled to arrive ... Those people who have not participated in the prayer services even on the Sabbath would do well to take advantage of the opportunity of the holidays and, as the saying goes, ‘to finally decide to do something after a long interval’ and become Jews in the end” (*El Djujetón* 5, no. 28 [1913], p. 4).⁵⁷

“*Le azíamos konoser el proverbo del poeta Shelomó, ‘Al tomar lereahá leh vashuv umahar etén*” “We acquainted him with the proverb of the poet, King Solomon:

57 Cf. Tk. *şeytanın ayağını kırmak* (literally, ‘to break Satan’s foot’).

‘Say not to thy neighbor, “Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give”’” (*El Djugetón* 5, no. 45 [1914], p. 1).⁵⁸

“*Proverbos turkos al séder álef bed*” “Turkish proverbs in alphabetical order” (*El Djugetón* 21, no. 18 [1929], p. 5).

“*Ay un proverbyo popular ke dize: ‘Te kyeres vengar? La ora de la shaká’*”
“There’s a popular proverb that says: ‘You want to take revenge? Do it when people are telling jokes’” (*Aksyón* 10, no. 2719 [Salonika 1938]).

A frequent user of proverbs is described in a text by a westernized writer as an “*ombre a proverbyos*”.⁵⁹

As illustrated above in Niyego’s observations, *proverbo* is still used in contemporary Judezmo. In 2008 Şeli Gaon wrote in the Istanbul Judezmo periodical *Şalom* about: <“... los proverbos, dichas i refranes i los desenes (çizim)”>. ⁶⁰ And yet, unlike most of the other Judezmo words used to denote proverbs, no diminutive form of *proverb(y)o* seems to be documented, suggesting that this term remained somewhat literary in register, never being fully absorbed into the informal, popular spoken register.

Although most of the proverbs documented in the collections appearing in the Judezmo press and popular literature beginning in the late nineteenth century were in Judezmo (or “*espanyol*”), it should be noted that the number of *Turkish* proverbs which evidently formed part of the Ottoman Judezmo speakers’ proverb repertoire, and which also received some documentation in the Judezmo press, was not insignificant. Nor were the proverbs in the collections necessarily segregated by language: for example, in the collection entitled “*Proverbyos o dichas*” appearing in the literary

58 Cf. Proverbs 3:28.

59 *La Gata* (series 2) 8, no. 44 (Salonika 1931), 2, reproduced in David. M. Bunis, *Judezmo: An Introduction to the Language of the Ottoman Sephardim* [in Hebrew], Magnes, Jerusalem 1999, p. 220. Nehama (*Dictionnaire du judéo-espagnol* [Note 9], p. 469) offers *refranéro* and *refranista* in that sense; but the latter, like his entry *refranéro* in the sense of ‘proverb collection’, would seem to be an ad hoc incorporation from Castilian based on the terminology used by Hispanists. In this connection Yehuda Hatsvi kindly sent me the following remark: <“En mi umilde opinion, “refranista” es una palabra “inventada” en vano, i no djugava ningun rolo entre los djidyos sefaradim (al menos los ke biviyen aki en Erets Yisrael en los anyos ’30 i ’40)”> (e-mail dated 30 April 2012).

60 “La ventana de vuestra ermana / Limmud” (<http://salom.com.tr/news/print/10220-La-ventana-vuestra-ermana--Limmud.aspx>).

periodical *El Kismet Poeta* (1, no. 9 [Izmir 1909], pp. 3-4), edited by ‘Alexander’ Benghiatt (c1863-1924), the 21 Judezmo and 7 Turkish proverbs are intermingled.

4.1.2 *Refrán/Reflán* and variants

In the first half of his dissertation on the Judezmo proverb, Isaac Jack Lévy (1969) noted the distinction sometimes made in Spanish between *proverbio*, used in certain contexts to denote a learned dictum, and *refrán*, denoting a more popular saying.⁶¹ The learned, literary, and somewhat foreign nature of *proverb(y)o* in Judezmo was already alluded to in the preceding section of this article. Of the Judezmo reflexes of Romance *proverbio/proverbe* and *refrán* (cf. Sp. *refrán* < Occitan *refranh*, Fr. *refrain*),⁶² *refrán*—and its variants, *re-/riflán* and *le-/lifrán*—are the more popular, spoken and widespread.⁶³

As noted above, paralleling one of the uses of *refrán* in the eighteenth-century *La guerta de oro* of ‘Atias, the variant form *reflán* was used parenthetically by a nineteenth-century author to explain the meaning of *proverb(y)o*, with which he evidently suspected some readers would be unfamiliar:

“*Era tadre! Komo dizen un proverb(y)o (reflán) en turko, ‘Son pishmán, faydá etméz’, ‘Después ke akontese una dezgrasya, repentirse no aze ningún provecho’*”
 “It was too late! As they say in a Turkish proverb, ‘After a mishap occurs, regrets over what might have been do no good’” (Balansi, *Los mas enteresantes kuentos...*, p. 31).⁶⁴

One of the earliest occurrences of *refrán* in a Judezmo text is in the anti-Christian polemical work *Fuente klara* (Salonika 1595), in which we find:

“... dize el refrán ke ‘Muchas vezes el ortelano avla buenas sentensias’” “... the proverb says that ‘Many times the gardener speaks wise words’” (6a).⁶⁵

61 Cf. also *proverbio* ‘sentencia, adagio o refrán’ vs. *refrán* ‘dicho agudo y sentencioso de uso común’ [my emphasis] (*Diccionario de la lengua española*, 22d. ed. [http://buscon.rae.es/]).

62 Cf. Corominas and Pascual, *Diccionario crítico etimológico* (Note 46), vol. 2, 1984, p. 939, s. *fracción* (*refrán*).

63 E.g., Nehama, *Dictionnaire du judéo-espagnol* (Note 9), p. 469; Perahya, *Diksyonaryo Judeo Espanyol* (Note 53), p. 187.

64 Izmir 1913.

65 For a romanized edition, see Pilar Romeu Ferré (ed.), *Fuente clara* (*Salónica 1595*), Tirocinio, Barcelona 2007.

In the eighteenth century the term occurs several times in David ‘Atias’ *La guerta de oro* (1788) to denote popular sayings; for example:

“... *el refrán dize ke ‘Kyen avla la verdad perde la amistad’*” “... the proverb says that ‘One who speaks the truth loses friendship’” (5b).

“... *el refrán dize ‘De la manyana se ve el buen día’*” “... the proverb says ‘One sees a good day from the morning’” (38a).

“... *el refrán ... dize ‘Vende i arepyéntete’*” “... the proverb ... says ‘Sell and regret’” (42b).

In his manual ‘Atias also illustrates the use of the plural of *refrán* formed with the Hebrew morpheme םי- (-im > -in): *refranín* (‘Atias, *La guerta de oro*, f. iia *refranín savyozos*, also f. 13a). Perhaps this plural marker was attracted to the word because of its formal resemblance to words of Hebrew origin with -án in the singular, -anim in the plural (e.g., למדן *lamdán* ‘learned man’, pl. למדנים *lamdanim*; זמן *zemán* ‘time’, pl. זמנים *zemanim*). *Refrán* with pluralizing -im continued to be used into the twentieth century, both in the Eastern and Western dialect regions of Ottoman Judezmo; for example:

“... *en refranim o meshalim*” “in proverbs or wise sayings” (Béxar Ḥayyim, *Sefer arba ‘a wě-‘esrim ... ḥeleq šēliši ... něvi‘im*, f. 2b).

<“No avia ovra ke el venerable def[o]nto [Abraham Cappon] no eksponia a mi modesto gjuzgamiento literario. »El Angustiador«, los proverbios versifikados, sus refranim arabos trasladados—jo tuve la diča de los konoser antes de mučos”>
“There was not a work which the venerable deceased [Abraham Cappon] did not expose to my modest literary evaluation. *El Angustiador*, the rhymed verses, his Arabic proverbs in translation—I had the fortune to become familiar with them before many others did” (*Jevrejski glas* 6, no. 43 [Sarajevo 1932], p. 6).

Although seemingly less popular among the rabbinical writers of the eighteenth century than *mashal*, *refrán* was prominent in the nineteenth-century rabbinical Judezmo of Yehuda Papo; for example:

“... *komo dizen en el refrán ‘El ke no se konsyente no vyene de djente, i lo kita a unto de enoshiyut’*” “... as they say in the proverb, ‘One who does not voice his opinion obviously comes from a common family, and he is not considered a person’” (Yēhuda ben Eli^cezer Papo (trans.), Eli^cezer ben Yiṣḥaq Papo, *Pele yo^ceṣ ... trezladado en ladino*, [vol. 1.], Vienna 1870, p. 108).

“Lo toman por mashá el refrán ke dize ‘La linpyeza es medya rikeza’” “They make full use of the proverb that says ‘Cleanliness is half of wealth’” (ibid., p. 203).

“Dize el refrán ‘Konushea kon los buenos i serás tu uno de eyos’” “The proverb says ‘Speak with good people and you will be one of them’” (ibid., p. 272).

“Al ken le dyo el She[m] yid[barah] el byen, ... si eskarsea de dar en todas las kozas ke está enkomendado de los syelos de dar, es komo el refrán ke dize ‘Los amos lo dan, los esklavos lo yoran’, ‘Saybí verir, telal vermés’, ‘El patrón ya se kontenta darlo, el telal no lo da’. I dize otro refrán ‘Ata el azno onde te dize el patrón’” “He to whom the Name Blessed Be He has given wealth, ... if he refrains from giving generously to all things which he is commanded by heaven to give, it is like the proverb that says, ‘The owners give it, the slaves cry about it’; ‘The owner is willing to give it up, but the auctioneer won’t’. And another proverb says ‘Tie the donkey where the owner tells you’” (ibid., p. 220).

In the twentieth century *refrán* was widely used in the titles of modest collections of popular proverbs, and in citations of proverbial sayings, Jewish and otherwise; for example:

Refranes akojidos por Shelomó Yisrael Sherezlí “Proverbs collected by Salomon Israel Cherezli” (Jerusalem 1903).

Refranes ... en turko muy djaveres “Very precious proverbs in Turkish” (Yona [before 1909], p. 1).

“Ya savésh muncho byen el refrán de vyejo: ‘Setam tinyozo es venturozo’” “You are very familiar with the old saying, ‘Someone who is just mangy is lucky’” (*El Djujetón* 1 [1909], p. 70).

“El refrán dize ‘Ninguno kyere sentir la “eshkavá” del padre, ma el hazán se la echa’” “The proverb says ‘No one wants to hear the funeral oration for his father, but the cantor recites it over him’” (*El kirbach* 2, no. 19 [Salonika 1911], p. 2).

“Un refrán franko dize: ‘Tu pas, tu kas, tu las’,⁶⁶ ke kyere dezir, de djidyó a djidyó: “*Todo pasa en este mundo*”” “A French proverb says ‘Everything passes, everything breaks, everything wears out’, which means, speaking from one Jew to another [in plain Judezmo]: ‘Everything passes in this world’” (*El Kulevro* 5, no. 48 [Salonika 1923], p. 3).

66 Cf. Fr. *Tout passe, tout casse, tout lasse*.

<“Ves, yo ye vi mučo en mi vida, i nunca no avli, komo tu konoses tu akel refran: ‘Por esto akea vieža no se kižo murir’”> “You see, I’ve borne a lot in my life, and I never complained, as [expressed in] that proverb you know ‘For that reason the old woman didn’t want to die’” (*Jevrejski glas* 2:34 [Sarajevo 1929], 9-10).

“... bueno dize el refrán ke ‘Kyen aspera, se dezespera’” “... the proverb puts it well that ‘One who is forced to wait becomes desperate’” (*Aksyón* 10, no. 2570 [Salonika 1938], p. 2).

<“... segun dize el refran: Todo lo ke azes kon plazer es kolay”> “... as the proverb says: Whatever you do with pleasure is easy” (Benni Aguado, Ladinokomunita, 6 April 2012).

4.1.2.1 *Reflán* (pl. *reflanim*)

In Spanish historical texts, the variant *reflán* is extremely rare, as it is in modern Spanish.⁶⁷ In Judezmo, however, the occurrence of this form, and of its plural with Hebrew-origin *-im/-in*, became increasingly documented from the early twentieth century; for example, in the popular writings of journalist ‘Alexander’ Benghiatt:

“*Bizim yibí adamlar kreemos en reflanes, komo kreer en aperkantar i otros bedugilikes ansina* “People like us believe in proverbs, like believing in magic spells and other such imprecations” (*El Meseret* 8, no. 9 [Izmir 1903], p. 5).

“*Es komo el reflán ke dizen, ‘Enriva pendones i debasho ... adí, bendén yelmesín [i.e., razgones/remendones]’* “It’s like the proverb they say, ‘On the outside, penants; on the inside...’ well, let it not come from me! [i.e., “rags”]” (*El Meseret* 8, no. 19 [1904], p. 4).⁶⁸

“*Ay de estos reflanim ke, por mil ke pase tyempos i anyos, kon todo esto eyos están en sus lugar... Nunka no me vo burlar de los reflanim*” “There are some of these proverbs that—though times may change and years may pass—continue

67 Spanish *reflán* occurs in the anonymous *Cancionero de Pero Guillén* (written not later than 1492), Brian Dutton (ed.), Universidad de Salamanca, Salamanca 1990, f. 195r. (also plural *reflanes*, *ibid.*, f. 534v); and in *Cantalicio Quirós y Miterio Castro*, written in a style representing local rural speech, written in 1883 by the Uruguayan Antonio Lussich (Jorge Luis Borges & Adolfo Bioy Casares (eds.), Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1955, p. 556) (REAL ACADEMIA ESPAÑOLA: Banco de datos (CORDE). *Corpus diacrónico del español*. <<http://www.rae.es>> [2.5.2012]; no examples are provided in CREA).

68 Cf. Tk. *adi benden gelmezsín*.

nevertheless to be appropriate... I'll never make fun of the proverbs" (*El Meseret* 9, no. 19 [1904], p. 5).

The form *reflán* is the only one cited by José Benoliel for Moroccan *Ḥaketía*,⁶⁹ and the form *re-/riflán* is still current among Judezmo speakers, as demonstrated by citations such as <"36 pajinas de reflanes djudeo-espanyoles kon la traduksyon en lashon"> (36 pages of Judeo-Spanish proverbs with a translation into Hebrew) and the variant proverb <"Reflan mintirozo no ay">, which appeared on the internet site *esefarad.com* in November 2011.⁷⁰ The expression <"riflan dulce"> (sweet proverb) appeared in the 20 October 2006 issue of the Istanbul Judezmo periodical <*El amanecer*>.⁷¹ Matilda Koen-Sarano offered the following comment with regard to Judezmo *reflán*:

<"El reflán djudeo-espanyol es una fraza lapidaria, de forma fiksa, munchas vezes en rima, ke puede deskriver una situasion o traer una similitud, enunsiar una idea o niegarla, kritikandola i burlandose de eya, para trokarla. El reflán puede ayudar, puede konsolar, puede amonestar, puede meter en guardia i puede azer riyir">
<"The Judeo-Spanish proverb is a lapidary phrase, of fixed form, often in rhyme, that can describe a situation or make a comparison, express an idea or negate it, while criticizing and poking fun at it, in order to change it. The proverb can help, console, annoy, put one on guard, and make one laugh".⁷²

A further evolved variant, *le-/lifrán*, is documented from 1914:

"'Sivdaḡ sin estorya es venturoza', dize el lefrán" "'A city without a [sordid] history is fortunate', says the proverb" (*El Djugetón* 5, no. 43 [Istanbul 1914], p. 3).

4.1.2.2 Diminutive *Refraniko*

One of the markers of the popular nature of the term *refrán/reflán* in Judezmo is the existence of the diminutive form *refraniko*.⁷³ A fictional character with a propensity for the use of proverbs, who was regularly featured in a Judezmo satirical series appearing between the world wars in several Salonika Judezmo periodicals, prefaced

69 José Benoliel, *Dialecto judeo-hispano-marroquí o hakitía*, 2d ed., Madrid, p. 243.

70 Edmond Cohen, "Reflanes de Matilda" (<http://www.esefarad.com/?p=27812>).

71 www.scribd.com/doc/50018833/Nnumero-20-Oktubre-2006.

72 Koen-Sarrano, "Reflan djudeo-espanyol" (Note 31).

73 E.g., <refraniko> appears in the subject of a message uploaded to Ladinokomunita by Erik Calderon on 23 October 2009.

critical remarks about a westernized character in the series with the statement: “*Tylene razón ... un refraniko ke dize, ‘De-los mios no kyero dezir, ma no kyero ni sentir’*” “Very true ... is the little proverb that says, ‘I want neither to talk about those close to me, nor to hear them spoken about’” (*Aksyón* 10, no. 2582 [Salonika 1938], p. 8).

The well-integratedness of *reflán/refrán* and diminutive *refraniko* in popular Judezmo is also illustrated by the use of the word in several variants of a proverb already noted above, which attributes supreme veracity to the proverb genre in general, and to a specific proverb of Turkish origin in particular:

“... *este bayle es a-la franka... Si lo bushkávamos de antes, no topávamos este bayle, i sin bushkar lo topimos. Es por esto ke ‘Reflán falso no ay’—‘Aramaklán bulunmás, inlá rastyelir’*” “... this dance is in the European style... If we had looked for such a dance from the start we’d never have come up with it; and without looking for it we found it. It’s for that reason that ‘There is no untrue proverb’—‘If you were to look for such a thing you wouldn’t find it; it only happens by chance’” (*El Meseret* 8, no. 9 [1903], p. 5).⁷⁴

Another variant of the first proverb, with the diminutive form, appears in a recent issue of the Jerusalem Judezmo periodical *Aki Yerushalayim*: <“Refraniko mentirozo no ay”.>⁷⁵

Refrán is also used in the saying:

“*En tus apuros i afanes, toma konsejo de los refranes*” “In your worries and cares, seek advice from the proverbs”.⁷⁶

4.1.3 *Mashal/Masal*

Although in Hebrew מַשָּׁל (*mašal*) is often used in the sense of a ‘parable, exemplum’, or brief story used to make a point in an argument or to illustrate a moral truth, in the biblical Book of Proverbs—called in Hebrew מִשְׁלֵי (*Mišle*), which is the construct plural of *mašal*—it denotes a proverb, or short, pithy saying expressing a basic truth or practical, general precept. In the same way, in popular Judezmo rabbinical works

74 Cf. Tk. *Aramakla(n) bulunmaz, illâ rastgelir*.

75 www.aki-yerushalayim.co.il/.../004-elrefran.htm

76 See discussion in Marc Shanker, “Traces of Sepharad”, in Marc Shanker, Antonio Muñoz Molina, and Theodore Anthony Perry, *Traces of Sepharad (Huellas de Sefarad Etchings of Judeo-Spanish Proverbs)*, Gravity Free Press, New York 2008, pp. 33-39

from the eighteenth century on, as well as in some journalistic and other essentially secular writing, *mashal*—or, as the word is often pronounced popularly, *masal*—is the term often used for a proverb or proverbial saying.⁷⁷ There may be influence here from cognate Arabic-origin Turkish *mesel* (or *darbimesel*) ‘proverb’. Although Judezmo writings of various types offer numerous illustrations of the use of *mashal/masal* in the sense of ‘proverb’, the term is not discussed in the research literature on the Judezmo proverb by scholars from outside the community.⁷⁸ Of those emerging from within the community itself, only Baruch ‘Uzi’el noted the use of this term. In fact, ‘Uzi’el stated: “It is worth noting that, for the concept ‘proverb’, the Sephardic Jews use the Hebrew word *mashal*—in the plural *meshalim* or *mishlayós* (with a Spanish suffix)—and only rarely, the Spanish word *refrán*’ (‘Uzi’el 1927: 325). But fifty years later, ‘Uzi’el’s fellow Salonikan, Joseph Nehama (*Dictionnaire du judéo-espagnol*, p. 349, s. *masál*) cited only the other, more widespread sense in which the word is used in Hebrew and Judezmo, ‘conte, allégorie...’ The absence of the other meaning in Nehama’s dictionary was noted, with no little chagrin, by Yehuda Hatsvi, an active

77 See also discussion of Judezmo *mashal* in ‘Uzi’el, “*Ha-folklor šel hayēhudim ha-sēfaradim*” (Note 18), p. 325, and *mashal* and *enshemplo* in Münch, “Šəlomo ben Ya‘aqov Hakohen” (Note 45). Singular <masal> is documented by Nehama (*Dictionnaire du judéo-espagnol* (Note 9), p. 349), and <mashal> by Isaac Moskona (“About One of the Components of the Language ‘Djudezmo’,” *Annual* [of the Social, Cultural, and Educational Association of the Jews in the People’s Republic of Bulgaria] 6 (1971), p. 203); the documented plural forms are *mashalim* (Ya‘aqov Altaraš, *Trezero di Yisrael*, vol. 4, Belgrade 1894, p. 263), *meshalim* (‘Uzi’el, *Hafolklor šel hayēhudim hasēfaradim*”, p. 325), *masalín* (*Aksyón* 4:922 [Salonika 1932], p. 3), <mashales> (with Hispanic-origin *-es*) (Isaac Moskona, *Pēnine Sēfarad*, Ma‘ariv, Tel Aviv 1981, p. 46); diminutive *masaliko* was recorded by Michael Molcho (“*Millim ‘ivriyyot ba- safa ha-sēfaradit-yēhudit*”, *Edot* 3 (1948), p. 85).

78 In 1927 Yišhaq Yēhezqel Yēhuda published a collection of 139 Judezmo proverbs under the title *משלי אספניולית-יהודית* (“*Mišle espanyolit-yēhudit*”) in the Hebrew journal *Šiyyon* 2, pp. 80-96. Max Grunwald used the term *משל-עם* (*mišle-‘am*) ‘folk proverbs’ in a brief collection of Judezmo proverbs from Sarajevo which he published in *Rēšumot* (new series) 2 (1946), 191-195; but when Grunwald’s article was republished in his posthumously-issued collected works (Grunwald, *Tales, Songs & Folkways of Sepharadic Jews* [Note 3], pp. 209-213), the editor changed the term to *פתגמי-עם* (*pitgēme-‘am*), which was more in keeping with the Israeli Hebrew folklore terminology current at the time. In any case, both Yēhuda and Grunwald used *mēšalim* to denote ‘proverbs’ in their own Hebrew discussion of the Judezmo proverbs, but they did not raise the issue of how the Judezmo speakers themselves referred to those proverbs.

contributor to the contemporary Judezmo press and internet sites. In a message to Ladinokomunita dated 24 August 2011 Hatsvi wrote:

<“El biervo ebreo ‘mashal’ no es solamente ‘fabula’, ma tambien un kuento imaginario o alegoriko, aforizmo i proverbio. El diksionario ekselente de Nehama lo ekspliko bien, en parte, ma, ‘me suvieron los fumos a la kavesa’ de notar una vez mas la lakuna del autor en la kultura judia: Nehama eskrive en su diksionario ke el biervo ‘masal’ derive del turko. I ande desho i abandono Nehama al Rey Shelomo ke peno i eskrivio, i mos regalo el livro de MISHLE, ke entro a la Biblia...?”

De toda manera, me akodro de los selaniklis viejos ke konosia yo en mi chikez; eyos raramente kulaneavan los biervos ‘proverbio’ o ‘refran’. Eyos dizian: ‘mashaliko.’ Oy no topo esta palavra ni en los diksionarios...

Al kuaderno de YYY (Yitzhak Yehezkel Yehuda) el total de los mashalikos ke mos trae el autor es 139. En akea epoka del siglo 20, kada mujer de las muestras savia i empleava en sus konversaciones algunas sinko vezes mas de esta kantidad...”⁷⁹

“The Hebrew word *mashal* means not only ‘fable’, but also an imaginary or allegorical story, or an aphorism or proverb. Nehama’s excellent dictionary explains it well, in part, but ‘fumes rose to my head’ when I saw once again the gaps in the author’s knowledge of Jewish culture: Nehama writes in his dictionary that the word *mashal* derives from Turkish.⁸⁰ Where and why did he abandon King Solomon, who strove and wrote and bequeathed to us the Book of Proverbs, a part of the Biblical canon...?”

“In any case, I remember the elderly Salonikans whom I knew in my youth; they rarely used the words *proverbio* or *refrán*. They said: *mashaliko*. Today I don’t even find that word in the dictionaries...

“In the proverb collection published by Yişhaq Yēhezqel Yēhuda, the total number of proverbs the author brings us is 139. In that [early] part of the twentieth century, every one of our women knew and used in their conversations five times that number...”

79 <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#search/mashaliko/131fbc3d397726be>

80 Actually, it is possible that the Spanish editors of Nehama’s dictionary, which was published posthumously, were responsible for the erroneous etymologies proposed for many of his entries. From Nehama’s other writings, there is every evidence that he had a thorough grounding in Jewish sources and traditions.

The earliest examples of the use of *mashal* in connection with Judezmo proverbs are in Hebrew. In the marginal notes in Hebrew used by Moshe Almosnino to summarize the lengthier vernacular discussion in his *Hanhagat ha-hayyim ... Rejimyento de la vida* (1564), he used משל הדיוט (*mašal hedyoṭ*, or ‘proverb of common people’) to characterize two proverbs cited in the body of the text:

“*Suelen dezir ‘No kon kyen nases sinó kon kyen pases’*” “They are used to saying ‘It is not among whom you are born but among whom you spend your time’” (14b).

“... *un komún i vulgo proverbyo sakado de los djuris konsultos havlando del ofiçio del pretor o djuez ke dize ‘La mucha konverçaçion es ramo de menospreçio’*” “... a common and popular proverb taken from the attorneys of law speaking about the office of the pretor or judge says ‘Much conversation is a kind of scorn/disrespect’” (35a).

In another Hebrew marginal note, Almosnino denoted the proverb used in his vernacular text as המשל הקדמוני (*ha-mašal ha-qadmoni*) ‘the early proverb’, and he added a Hebrew analogue, also used in Judezmo: “צער רבים חצי נחמה” (*‘The early proverb said: Ša‘ar rabi[m] ḥaši nēḥama ‘A sorrow shared by many is half a consolation’*):⁸¹

“... *el proverbyo antigo komún en todas las naciones ke dize ‘Mal de muchos es k[o]nsuelo’*” “... the old proverb common in all nations that says ‘The sorrow of many is a consolation’” (108a).

Interestingly, the phrase משל הדיוט (*mašal hedyoṭ*) is also used to introduce two Judezmo proverbs cited by Rabbi Yom Tov Šahalón (or ‘Mahariṭaš’, b. Safed, 1559–d. after 1638) to bring home points of Jewish law raised in his responsa collection (1694):

“כי הוא משל הדיוט קין נו אדובא גוטירא אדובה קאזה אינטירא” (“Because it is a proverb of common people: *Ken no adova gotera adova kaza entera* [‘He who does not fix a leak fixes a whole house’]”)⁸²

81 The Hebrew variant צרת רבים חצי נחמה, appearing for example in Giṭṭin 58b, Maharsha 4, is employed in the context of rabbinical Judezmo in Rēfa’el Ḥiyya Pontrémoli, *Sefer me-am lo‘ez ‘Ester*, 2d ed., Constantinople 1899, p. 258.

82 Yom Tov Šahalón, *Responsa* (old series), Venice 1694, no. 74.

וכל אחד יזהיר את חברו כמו שאומרים משל הדיוט מאש ויאין קואטרו אוג'וש קי
דוש ("And everyone should warn his fellow man, as they said in the common
proverb: *Mas veen kuarto ojos ke dos* ['Four eyes see more than two']).⁸³

Şahalon introduced another Judezmo proverb by means of the cognate Aramaic
expression מתלין מתלא (*mětalin mitla*) "they use the proverb":

"מתלין מתלא די באשו דימי מאנטו אאיל ריי מאטו" ("They use the proverb: *De
basho de-mi manto a-el rey mato* ['Under my cloak I kill the king']).⁸⁴

In texts in Judezmo itself, the use of *mashal/masal* in the sense of 'proverb' continued
from that time into the modern era. Numerous occurrences are found in the three
volumes of the exegetical composition *Me-^cam lo lo^eez* authored by Rabbi Yişhaq
Magriso, where it is generally preceded by expressions stating that the cited expression
is a *mashal ke dizen (la djente)* "proverb which they (the people) say". For example:

"*Esto es el mashal ke dizen la djente 'Ken la myel menea, algo se le apega'*"
"This is [like] the proverb that the people say 'One who mixes honey, some of it
sticks to him'" (Yişhaq Magriso, *Sefer me-^cam lo^eez heleq šeni mi-sefer šēmot ...
en lađino*, Constantinople 1746, p. 109b).

"*Era komo el mashal ke dizen la djente 'A-ti te lo digo, nuera; óyelo tu suegra'*"
"This was like the proverb that the people say 'I say it to you, daughter-in-law;
hear it, mother-in-law'" (Yişhaq Magriso, *Sefer me-^cam lo^eez heleq šēliši, sefer
wa-yiqra ... en lađino*, Constantinople 1753, 39a).

"... *el mashal ke dizen la djente 'El vyejo en kaza, entronpeso es en la kaza; la
vyeja en kaza, trezoro es en la kaza'*" "... the proverb that the people say 'An
old man in the house is an obstacle in the house; an old woman in the house is a
treasure in the house'" (Magriso, *Sefer me-^cam lo^eez heleq šēliši*, 181a).⁸⁵

"*I esto es el mashal ke dizen la djente 'El She[m] yid[barah] mos de byen i un
lugar onde meter'*" "And this is the proverb that the people say 'May the Name
Blessed Be He give us good things and a place to put them'" (Magriso, *Sefer me-^c
am lo^eez heleq šeni*, p. 27b).

83 Şahalon, *Responsa*, no. 240.

84 Şahalon, *Responsa*, no. 231.

85 On variants of this proverb, see Alexander, "'Cast Thy Bread Upon the Waters'" (Note 51),
p. *294.

“Ansí es el mashal ke dizen la djente ‘La nave ke tyene munchos reizes, su kavo es de undirse’” “Thus is the proverb that the people say ‘The ship that has many captains is destined to sink’” (Magriso, *Sefer me-^çam lo^çez *heleq šeni**, p. 63b).

“Esto es el mashal ke dizen ‘A la abizba, ni de tu myel ni de tu punchón’” “This is the proverb that they say ‘To the bee, [I want] neither your honey nor your sting’” (Magriso, *Sefer me-^çam lo^çez *heleq šeni**, p. 110a).

“Esto es el mashal ke dizen la djente ‘El pozo ke bevistes agua, no eches pyedra en-el’” “This is the proverb that the people say ‘Into a well from which you drank water do not cast a stone’” (Magriso, *Sefer me-^çam lo^çez *heleq šeni**, p. 146a).⁸⁶

In the Judezmo rabbinical literature produced by rabbis in diverse parts of the Ottoman Empire, the term *mashal/masal* continued to enjoy use in the sense of ‘proverb’ or ‘popular saying’ into the modern era; for example:

“Asemeja a el mashal ... ‘El djidyó no tyene nada otro ke sus enemigos’” “It resembles the proverb ... ‘The Jew has nothing but his enemies’” (Yosef ben Ma’ir Sason and Yişhaq Bëxor Amarachi, *Sefer darxe ha-adam*, 2d ed., Salonika 1849, p. 45b).

“Según dizen mashal la djente ‘Achakes de lo seko se kema lo verde’” “As the people say in the proverb, ‘Because of the dry (wood), the green burns’” (Raḥamim Mënaḥem Mitrani, *Sefer me-^çam lo^çez *he[leq] a[lef] ‘al sefer Yëhošua^ç**, Salonika 1849, p. 104a).

“Mashal dizen la djente, ‘Dale a beber un poko de vino al soytari del rey i te alavará onde el rey’” “The people say a proverb ‘Give the king’s clown a little wine to drink and he’ll praise you to the king’” (Avraham Fintsi, *Sefer leqet hazohar en ladino*, Belgrade 1859, p. 157a).

“Mashal dizen la djente ‘El pato non se aparta del fuego; ezmola el kuchío, vale detrás’” “The people say a proverb ‘The duck doesn’t move far from the fire; sharpen the knife, and go to it from behind’” (Fintsi, *ibid.*, p. 141b).

In the twentieth century, the form *masal* (מאסאל) was also employed by the popular Judezmo journalist ‘Alexander’ Benghiatt of Izmir to denote proverbial expressions used by Judezmo speakers, whether they were perceived to be of European origin, as for example:

86 For discussion of a variant of this proverb see Alexander, “‘Cast Thy Bread Upon the Waters’” (Note 51), pp. *289-290.

“*Buyuk sozumé tové,*⁸⁷ *valla ke tyenen razón los frankos ke dizen un masal ‘Ken apromete, en devda se mete’*” “I hate to talk big, but by God the westerners are right to use the proverb, ‘He who makes a promise acquires a debt’” (*El Meseret* 8, no. 7 [Izmir 1903], p. 5; cf. Fr. *Qui promet, en dette se met*; Sp. *Quien fia o promete, en deuda se mete*).

or of Turkish/Ottoman origin, as for example:

“*Dushuneo i digo de no eskrivir mas, no sea ke kachiree algún lakirdí demazía i me venga algún hal a-la kavesa, porke ay un masal ke dize: ‘Buyuk lokmá ye, buyuk lakirdí soylema’*” “I think about it and say I won’t write [for the press] any more, just in case I make some blooper and bring a problematic situation on my head; because there’s a proverb that says: ‘Don’t be too sure of yourself’ [literally, “Eat a big mouthful of food, but don’t take a big word in your mouth”]” (*El Meseret* 8, no. 16 [1904], p. 5).⁸⁸

“*Un masal dize ‘Ne suya dayán, ne kariá inán’*” “A proverb says ‘Neither hold water nor believe an old woman’” (*El Meseret* 8, no. 24 [1904], p. 5).⁸⁹

The longer Hebrew-origin expression, מַשַּׁל הַרְיוֹט (*mashal edyot*), too, was employed in Judezmo texts into the modern era; for example:

“*Sus kazas están yenas de todo lo bueno, ke por esta razón no kreen a el prove, komo dizen el mashal edyot, ‘Asavea enó maamin ed araev’, ‘El arto non kree a el ambrento’*” “Their houses are full of plenty, and for this reason they do not believe the poor; as the popular proverb says, ‘A man who is full does not believe a man who is hungry’, ‘The sated man does not believe the hungry man’” (Rěfa’el Yişhaq Ma’ir Benveniste, *Me-‘am lo‘ez ‘al mēgillat Rut*, Salonika 1882, p. 167).

Like *reflán/refrán*, the well-integrated status of *mashal* in popular Judezmo is demonstrated, among others, by its use in the diminutive form, *mashaliko*, as insisted upon by Yehuda Hatsvi, and as demonstrated by its appearance in a variant of the popular proverb emphasizing the truth of proverbial statements: *Mashal mentirozo non ay* (Baruch ‘Uzi’el, “Ha-folklor šel ha-yēhudim ha-sēfaradim, *Rěšumot* 5 (1927), p. 326 no. 1).

87 Cf. Tk. *Büyük sözüme tövbe!*

88 Cf. Tk. *Büyük lokma ye, büyük lakırdı/söz söyleme.*

89 Cf. Tk. *Ne suya dayan, ne kariya inan.*

4.1.4 *Pasuk, mizvá*

Another two terms, also of Hebrew origin, connect the popular Judezmo proverb or saying with verses in sacred sources such as the Bible and Talmud which bear a resemblance to the proverb in structure and character: *pasuk* (Heb. פסוק/*pasuq*) and *mizvá* (Heb. מצוה/*mišwa*). In some instances the Judezmo proverbs are actually adaptations of verses in the sacred-sources. For example, a volume of the *Me-^oam lo^eez* series offers the second part of the original Hebrew text of Proverbs (14:1) with its Judezmo adaptation. For a section of *La guerta de oro*, the Judezmo translations of Proverbs 1:8 and 14:1 are sufficient, and then the text of Proverbs 18:22 is presented in Hebrew only. A popular periodical from Salonika advises readers to heed the message expressed in Avot 2:5, presented in Judezmo translation. In each of these texts, the proverbial statement is denoted as a *pasuk*:

“Dize el pasuk ‘Wě-’iwwelet bě-yadeha tehersennu’ (ואולת בידיה תהרסנו) ,kere dezir ke ‘La loka kon sus manos deroka su kaza’” “The verse says ‘But the foolish plucketh it down with her hands’ [=JPS], meaning that ‘The insane woman with her own hands destroys her house’” (Magriso, *Sefer me-^oam lo^eez ħeleq šeni*, p. 82a).

“En dita letra se deklarala el pasuk ke dize ‘Oe mi ijo kastigeryo de tu padre, i non deshes ley de tu madre’ ... [En] dita letra ... se deklarala el pasuk ke dize ‘Mujer savia fragua su kaza, i la loka kon su mano la deroka’, komo tambyén el pasuk ke dize מצא אשה מצה טוב (Maša ’iša maša tov) “In this letter is explicated the verse that says ‘Hear, my son, the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the teaching of thy mother’ [=JPS] ... [In] this letter ... is explicated the verse that says ‘Every wise woman buildeth her house, but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands’ [=JPS], as well as the verse that says ‘Whoso findeth a wife findeth a great good’ [=JPS]” (‘Atias, *La guerta de oro*, [iib], 55b-56a).

“No saves ke el pasuk dize: ‘I no djuzges a tu haver asta ke ayeges a su lugar?’” (“Don’t you know the verse that says, ‘Do not judge your fellow man until you have been in his position?’”) (*El Rizón* 13, no. 15 [Salonika 1938]).

In the popular satirical press the same term is also used, perhaps facetiously, to denote Judezmo folk proverbs and even international political mottoes bearing no direct relation to verses in sacred texts. In some instances the apparent irony is intensified by referring to adherence to the message of the proverb as *afirmar la mizvá del pasuk* (to fulfill the commandment of the verse). For example:

“*El pasuk disho ... ‘Ija fueres, madre serás, lo-ke azes resivirás’*⁹⁰ ... *Los masadjís kijeron este anyo afirmar la mizvá del pasuk: ‘Ni pan ni agua por mano de djudyó’*” “The verse said ... ‘You were a daughter, you shall be a mother, what you do you will receive’ ... The matzah bakers wanted to fulfill the commandment of the verse ‘Neither bread nor water from the hands of a Jew’” (*El Djugetón* 6, no. 5 [1914], p. 4).

“*Este chiko negosyo está muncho reushendo grasyas a-la ahađud de sus aderentes; por esto disho el pasuk: ‘La unyón aze la fuersa’*” “This little business is thriving thanks to the unity of its members; for this reason the verse said ‘In unity there is strength’” (*El Djugetón* 6, no. 11 [1914], p. 8; cf. Fr. *L’union fait la force*).

“*El pasuk dize ‘Alađo de lo seko se kema i lo vedre’*” (“The verse says: ‘Near dry wood, green wood too will burn’”) (*El Rizón* 13, no. 7 [1938]).⁹¹

In some contexts this phrase is abbreviated to *(la) mizvá (de)*, which then functions as a denotation for a proverb—even one of Turkish origin; for example:

“*Kerésh afirmar la mizvá de ‘Kuando vesh el igito, apareja el vestidiko’*” “Do you want to fulfill the commandment of ‘When you see a little fig, prepare the little suit [to give to children of the poor]?’” (*El Djugetón* 5, no. 24 [1913], p. 4).

“*Kijimos afirmar la mizvá de ‘Ya ich, ya uch’*” “We wanted to fulfill the commandment of ‘Either nothing or everything’” (*El Djugetón* 5, no. 1 (13), p. 3).⁹²

4.1.5 Literary terms of restricted use

In addition to the terms for ‘proverb’ discussed thus far, there are several denotations which are restricted to literary Judezmo. The first of these terms is already documented from the turn of the seventeenth century, and appears in the writing of an author whose language was influenced by contemporaneous Castilian. The other terms are documented from the end of the nineteenth century or later, and are found in the writings of authors influenced by modern Western European languages and literatures, from which they probably borrowed them:

90 For discussion of variants of this proverb, see Alexander, “‘Cast Thy Bread Upon the Waters’” (Note 51), pp. *287-288.

91 Note that, in an example in the preceding section, a variant of this proverb was referred to by a rabbinical author as a *mashal*.

92 Cf. Tk. *Hiç üç, or Ya üç, ya hiç*.

4.1.5.1 *Sentensya*

This may be compared with Castilian *sentencia* (< Lat. *sententiā*), denoting a succinct, sober statement:

“... lo-ke dize el refrán, ke ‘Muchas vezes el ortelano avla buenas sentensias’”
“... what the proverb says, that ‘Many times the gardener speaks wise words’”
(*Fuente klara* 1595, 6a).

Probably under the influence of French *sentence*, Spanish *sentencia* or Italian *sentenza*, the word appears again in the modern era; for example:

<“sentensyas dogmatikas i refleksyones de vyejos savyos”> (dogmatic sentences and reflections of old sages) (Perahya 2008).

4.1.5.2 *Adadjyo*

Given the presence of word-medial *-dj-*, the term probably reflects Italian *adagio*:

“*Por dezir ke una persona persiste en su idea, en sus demandas, dizen ‘Está en sus tredje. No es solamente onde los djudyós espanyoles ke emplean este adadjyo, ma tambyén en los kristyanos de-la Europa, onde los almanos partikolarmente’*”
“To say that a person persists in maintaining his own idea, or his own demands, they say ‘He keeps to his thirteen’”.⁹³ It is not only the Spanish Jews who use this adage, but also the Christians of Europe, and especially the Germans” (*El Enstruktur* 1:18 [Constantinople, 9, August 1888], 171).

4.1.5.3 *Máksima*

The term is apparently a late-nineteenth century learned borrowing from Spanish (*máxima*), perhaps with influence from French *maxime* or Italian *massima*:

“*Sharl Limozén, Kontra el antisemitizmo: máksimas i refleksyones, imitado por un eskrivano djudyó* “Charles Limousin, Against anti-Semitism: maxims and reflections, adapted by a Jewish writer” (title of a book published in Vienna, 1889).

“*Mi buketo ... dichas de oro, máksimas i proverbys*” (My bouquet ... golden sayings, maxims and proverbs) (title of a folklore collection published in Salonika c1920).

93 Cf. the Thirteen Articles of Faith of Maimonides.

4.1.5.4. (pl.) *Refleksyones*

Seemingly an adaptation of French (*réflexions*) or Spanish (*reflexiones*), perhaps with influence from Italian *riflessioni*.⁹⁴

Sharl Limozín, Kontra el antisemitizmo: máksimas i refleksyones, imitado por un eskrivano djudyó (title of a book published in Vienna 1889).

4.1.5.5 *Aforizmo*

Apparently a twentieth-century adaptation of French *aphorisme*, Italian *aforismo/-a*, or Spanish *aforismo*.

<“El biervo ebreo ‘mashal’ no es solamente ‘fabula’, ma tambien un kuento imaginario o alegoriko, aforizmo i proverbio”> “The Hebrew word *mashal* means not only ‘fable’, but also an imaginary or allegorical story, or an aphorism or proverb”.⁹⁵

4.1.5.6 *Ekspresyón*

This is a general term for an ‘expression’ of various kinds, and may be compared with French *expression*, Italian *espressione*, and Spanish *expresión*.

<“... muchos de mozotros konosen bien la ekspresion ke dize: ‘Ya vendio el kezo!’”> ‘... many of us well know the expression that says: “Now he’s sold the cheese”’ (Yehuda Hatsvi, Ladinokomunita, 26 August 2011).

4.2 SAYING

In this section we discuss Judezmo terms for concise expressions of wisdom or truth, as well as various types of idioms.

4.2.1 *Dicha*

To denote a ‘saying’, Castilian generally uses masculine *dicho*, the past participle of *decir* ‘to say’, and this is the term used in the sixteenth century by Rabbi Moshe Almosnino of Salonika, whose literary language, as was noted, represented that of the small elite group of his time which saw Castilian as its normative model. For example:

94 Cf. Klara Perahya et al., *Diksyonaryo Judeo Espanyol* (Note 53), p. 187 s. <refleksyones>.

95 Yehuda Hatsvi (<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#search/mashaliko/131fbc3d397726be>).

“... *el vulgo dicho ‘El tyempo pasado pareçe mejor ke el presente’*” “... the common saying ‘Past times seem better than the present’” (Almosnino 1564: ‘44b’ [=45b]).

“... *el dicho del vulgo, ke komun mente (l)yaman ‘kruel’ a el muy airado*” “... the saying of the popular sector, who commonly call a very angry person ‘cruel’” (Almosnino 1564: 88b).

Masculine plural (*mis*) *dichos* is also used as the translation of Hebrew אָמַרְי (‘*amaray*) ‘my words (or sayings)’ in Proverbs 2:1, in the Bible translation published in Ferrara, 1553, by former *conversos*, as it had been in the pre-Expulsion Hispanic Bible translations E5/E7, EV, E4, BNM.

In the traditional Jewish translations of Proverbs, however, the feminine gender of Hebrew אִמְרָה (‘*imra*) ‘word, saying’ instead led to the innovative use of feminine *dicha*, for example, *mis dichas* in Proverbs 2:1 (*dichas* also appears as the translation of ‘*amaray*’ in Proverbs 4:10 and 4:20) in the Ladino calque translation published in Salonika, 1572,⁹⁶ and in that edited by Yisrael bēxar Ḥayyim in Vienna, 1816. *Dicha* continued to be employed among Judezmo speakers to denote a ‘(proverbial) saying’ into the modern era,⁹⁷ for example:

“*Proverbyos o dichas*” ‘Proverbs or sayings’ (*El Kismet Poeta* 1:9 [Izmir 1909], 3-4).

<“Siempre estava kon lu uno i lo esteso komo ke de eia veniva akeja diča: »La vieža kon sus tarajinas<”> “She was always preoccupied by the same thing, as if it were about her that the saying arose, ‘The old woman with her noodles’” (*Jevrejski glas* 2:5 [Sarajevo 1928], 4).⁹⁸

“*Mi buketo ... dichas de oro, máksimas i proverbyos*” “My bouquet ... golden sayings, maxims and proverbs” (title of a folklore collection published in Salonika c1920).

<“Ay otros proverbos i dichas ke entraron al judeo-espanyol...”> “There are other proverbs and sayings that entered Judeo-Spanish...” (Dora Niyego, *Şalom*, 9 January 2008).⁹⁹

96 Reproduced, without vocalization, in Lazar, *Ladino Scriptures* (Note 44), vol. 2.

97 Cf. Perahya, *Diksyonaryo Judeo Espanyol* (Note 53), p. 82 s. <diča>.

98 It is a pleasure to thank Eliezer Papo for providing me with a copy of this source.

99 *Şalom gazetesini* (<http://www.salom.com.tr/news/print/3447-La-kultura-popular-de-los-Sepharadis.aspx>).

4.2.2 *Palavra, byervo*

The use of the terms *palavra* (< Lat. *parabōla*) and *verbo* (< Lat. *vĕrbum*), literally denoting ‘word’, in the sense of ‘saying’ or ‘expression’, is old in Spanish.¹⁰⁰ The use of corresponding Judezmo *palavra* and *byervo* probably has a long history as well, although documented examples seem to appear only in the modern era; for example:

Palavra

“*Varda*’ es una *palavra* ke signifika ‘dar el paso’ a uno ke está koryendo; i ke los arabadjís de Bey oglú, en pasando, gritan ‘*Varda*’ después ke ya echan en basho a las personas” “*Varda* [‘Look out! Keep clear! Cf. Tk. *varda* < It. *guarda*] is a saying which means ‘to give way’ to someone who is running, and which the wagon drivers of Beyoğlu [Constantinople] shout after they have deboarded their passengers) (*El Tyempo* 1, no. 75 [Constantinople 1873], p. 17).

“*Avlimos* ... por la kriatura ke se topó sola en su kamareta i ke su madre se divertía en la kaza de djugo... Syertos ombres dezían ke si se murjó la kriatura, no es la kavza del djugo si no ke su mazal, la ora, ke le vino; i kon una *palavra* byen dicha en turko: ‘Edjil ímish, edjil!’” “We spoke about the child who [died when he] was left in his bedroom while his mother was enjoying herself in a gambling casino. Some people said that if the child died, it wasn’t because of the gambling, but rather his fate, his time, had come; and using a well-formulated saying of Turkish origin, ‘His hour of death had come’” (*El Djugetón* 5, no. 13 [1913], p. 2).

Byervo

“‘*Enkoyamal*’ ... dizen este *byervo* kuando avlan de alguna koza triste o de algún muerto i se boltan agora adresándosen a un amigo. Entonses le dizen ‘En kuyo mal’, lo ke kere dezir en espanyol puro: en akel esté el mal. El *byervo* ‘*enkoyamal*’ lo dizen tambyén en vezes por burla. Entonses el depende del lashón akódeshe ‘im ko yomar’, lo ke iguala a ‘sozum yabaná’” “*Enkoyamal* ... they say this expression when someone speaks of something sad, such as a death, and then he begins to address his companion. In pure Spanish *en cuyo mal* means ‘may misfortune be upon him.’ But sometimes *enkoyamal* is said in jest. Then it reflects Hebrew אַם כֵּה יֵאָמַר [*im ko yomar*], meaning the same as Turkish *sözüm yabana* [‘pardon the expression’]” (*El Meseret* 8, no. 52 [Izmir 1904], p. 5).

100 Cf. Corominas and Pascual, *Diccionario crítico etimológico* (Note 46), vol. 4 (1985), s. *palavra*; *ibid.*, vol. 5 (1986), s. *verbo*.

“No saves... *el byervo ke dize ke ‘Kuenta mas eskura está la nochada, mas deprisamanese?’*” “Don’t you know ... the saying that says ‘The darker the night is, the earlier the day dawns?’” (*Mesajero* 4, no. 1069 [Salonika 1939]).

4.2.3 *Palavra de-/diziđera*

This phrase designates a ‘turn of phrase’, ‘manner of speaking’, or ‘common saying’, not to be taken literally, or a ‘proverb’ or ‘wise saying’.¹⁰¹

<“Esta madre kitó al mundo bulá de fižos; *palavra dezidera*: tyene očo kriaturas”>
“This mother produced a flood of children; that’s just a manner of speaking: she has eight children” (Nehama, *Dictionnaire du judéo-espagnol*, p. 138 s. *dezidera*: *palavra dezidera*).

<“...el refran era ... komo una “*palavra dizidera*” ke se kulaneava en kada nada”>
“... the proverb was like a ‘wise saying’ that was used at every opportunity” (Yehuda Hatsvi, e-mail dated 30 April 2012).

4.2.4 *Memrá*

This Hebraism in Judezmo denotes a ‘saying’ or ‘expression’ and is documented in the early-twentieth-century manuscript dictionary of Nissim de Yehuda Pardo of Izmir: “*Una memrá de fulano*” “Someone’s expression”.

4.2.5 *Fraza/Fraze*

Another term for ‘expression’ or ‘saying’ which was probably part of the language of the elite Hispanizers in the sixteenth century and then disappeared from Judezmo, only to re-emerge in the modern era under the influence of Italian *frase*, French *phrase*, or Spanish *frase* is *fraza* or *fraze*:

“*Yo veo kon mis propyos ojos ke todo el ke melda mis artículos se topa muy kontente, i la fraze ke kita después de eskapar es estos byervos: ‘Bueno darsa si’[nyor] haham, si ay ken lo oya*”.

“I see with my own eyes that everyone who reads my articles is very content, and the expression he utters after finishing them consists of these words “You lecture well, honored Rabbi, but is anyone listening?”” (*El Djugetón* 5:13 [1913], p. 1).

<“El reflán djudeo-espanyol es una *fraza lapidaria*, de forma fiksa...”> “The

101 Cf. Šelomo Rosanes, *Divre yēme Yisra’el bē-Togarma*, vol. 1, Dvir, Tel Aviv, 1930, p. 291.

Judeo-Spanish proverb is a lapidary phrase, of fixed form...” (Koen-Sarano, 2004, “El reflán djudeo-espanyol: Espejo de las komunitas sefaradis”, *Aki Yerushalayim* 75 (http://www.aki-yerushalayim.co.il/ay/075/075_08_reflan.htm))

4.3 Expressions of *Vox Populi*, the Voice of the People

In both speech and writing, proverbs and proverbial sayings are perhaps most often introduced not by stating terms denoting the genre, but rather by employing various phrases expressing the fact that they are statements reflecting the *vox populi*, what ‘we’, or ‘they’, or ‘the people’ say. Some of the most frequent of these formulations in Judezmo are the following:

4.3.1 *Dizen* ‘They say’ / *Uzan a dezir* ‘They are accustomed to saying’ / *Me dizen*

‘They tell me’

“*Kuando keren dezir por algùn ombre ke es muy vyejo, dizen ‘Fulano tyene los anyos de Téráh’*” “When they want to say of some man that he is very old, they say, ‘So and so is as old as Terah’” (Xulí 1730: 95a). “*Me dizen ke ‘Non kale despertar a-kyen durme’*” “They tell me that ‘One should not wake someone who is asleep’” (‘Atias, *La guerta de oro*, f. 48b).

“*Dizen ke ‘Las parás tyenen alas.’ Beemé ke es vedrá’*” “They say that ‘Money has wings’. Really it is true” (Jacques Danon, *La Epoka* 28, no. 1373 [Salonika 1903], p. 9).

<“De ay es ke dizen: “Guadrarse en las aldas de la madre”> “It is from this that they say ‘To hide/take refuge under your mother’s skirts’” (Rachel Amado Bortnick, *Ladinokomunita*, 8 October 2011).

When an author disagrees with the lesson apparently taught by a saying, he may refer to its users as *algunos dezmeoyados* ‘senseless people’ or some other derogatory expression; for example:

“... *algunos dezmeoyados ... dizen, ‘Los males no kaminan por las montanyas’, ... esta es una avla muy fea’*” “... some senseless people ... say, ‘Troubles don’t travel through mountains’, ... this is a very ugly expression” (Šabbētay ben Ya‘aqov Vitas, *Sefer mēšivat nefeš*, vol. 1, Constantinople 1743, p. 50b).

4.3.2 *Komo/Asegún/Konforme dizen (la djente / el olam / el mundo) ‘As they (the people / the world) say(s)’*

“*Komo dizen la djente, ‘El ke tyene enforkado en su mishpahá, no le digan, ‘Enkólgame este peshkado’*” (“As the people say, ‘To one who has had someone in his family hanged, they should not say, ‘Hang this fish for me’”) (Avraham ben Yiṣḥaq Asa (tr.), Yiṣḥaq Abohav, *Sefer mēnorat ha-ma’or ... en lađino*, Constantinople 1762, p. 28a).

“*‘Lo medyano es syempre lo bueno’, asegún dizen la djente; ‘Emsai shalem (אמצעי שלם)’*” (“The middle road is always best’, as the people say; ‘The middle road is perfect’”) (Yiṣḥaq Magriso, *Sefer me-^cam lo^eez ḥeleq šēliši, sefer wa-yiqra ... en lađino*, Constantinople 1753, 129a).

“*Según dizen la djente, ‘Quando el Dyo está kon tigo no te espantes de tu enemigo’*” (“As the people say, ‘When God is with you, do not fear your enemy’”) (Mitrani, *Sefer me-^cam lo^eez ḥe[leq] a[leff] ^cal sefer Yěhošua^c*, p. 29b).

“*Konforme dizen la djente, ‘En pleyto no se desparte konfites sinó malas kuchiadas’*” (“As the people say, ‘In a fight one does not distribute hard candies but piercing words’”) (Mitrani, *Sefer me-^cam lo^eez ḥe[leq] a[leff] ^cal sefer Yěhošua^c*, p. 114b).

“*Ya dizen la djente, ‘De-la manyana ya se vee el buen día’*” (“The people say, ‘From the morning a good day is seen’”) (Eli‘ezer ben Šem Ṭov Papo, *Sefer Dammeseq ‘Eli‘ezer*, vol. 1, ‘Orah ḥayyim, Belgrade 1862, p. 41b).

“*Komo dizen ‘A la bizba, ni tu myel ni tu punchón’*” (“As they say, ‘To the bee, [I want] neither your honey nor your sting’”) (Fintsi, *Sefer leqeṭ ha-zohar en lađino*, 180b).

“*Bivía en Bagdad un buen ombre ke ‘No tenía katilaká’, komo dizen, ‘kon ninguno’*” (“There lived in Baghdad a good man who, as they say, ‘Wanted nothing to do with anyone’”) (Balansí [trans.], *Los mas enteresantes kuentos de ...*, p. 339). <“... dizen la djente ke ‘El kamino al Gan Eden esta basho de los pies de la mujer’”> “... the people say that ‘The road to heaven is under the feet of a woman’” (Eliezer Papo, esefarad.com, 11 December 2011).

4.3.3 *Es verdad lo-ke dizen ‘It’s true what they say’*

“*La tos i el balgam ke nos salía por la naríz era a karar ke no pođíamos yorushear kon ningún ađam hay... De kuando meldimos el avizo ... por el rakí ke vende si[nyor] Ventura, ... mandamos a tomar kon bilik, i kon poko ke bevimos mos*

alegra, i ... birdén biré mos se kurtó la tos. Es verdađ lo-ke dizen: ‘Ne versan onú alirsin, ekmek istersan ekmekchidén al’” “The coughing and the phlegm that came out through our nose was such that we couldn’t speak with a living soul. But since we read the advertisement for the rakı that Mr. Ventura sells, we send for it by the demijohn; and with the little that we’ve drunk, it gladdened us, and all at once our cough stopped. It’s true what they say: ‘Whatever they give, take, if you want bread, buy it from the baker’” (*El Djugetón* 5, no. 4 [1913], p. 7).¹⁰² <“Es verdađ lo ke dizen los turkos, ke ‘El guerko se meskla en todo lo ke se aze kon adjele’”> “It’s true what the Turks say, that ‘The devil mixes into everything that one does with haste’” (Rachel Amado Bortnick, Ladinokomunita, 7 March 2012).

4.3.4 *Komo/Según dezimos* ‘As we say’

“Komo dezimos kuando keremos loar alguna ovra, ‘Bendichas manos ke tal fizyeron’” “As we say when we want to praise some work, ‘Blessed are the hands that did such a thing’” (*Fuente klara* 1595, 49a). *“No egziste ke un solo órgano seryo ke ‘Syerve por patah i por kamés’, komo dezimos vulgarmente*” “There’s only one periodical that’s ‘Worth it’s salt’, as we say in the vernacular” (*Aksyón* [Salonika 9.2.1936], p. 1).

4.3.5 *Non dezir* ‘One shouldn’t say’

“... non dezir ‘Asprikos i diavlikos non pueden estar solikos’, ni menos dezir ke ‘El ganar enbeza a-la persona a-gastar’” “... one shouldn’t say ‘Little money and little devils shouldn’t be alone’, nor should one say ‘Earning money teaches a person to spend’” (Atias. *La guerta de oro*, 57a).

4.3.6 *Es ditado* ‘It is said’

The spoken-language character of the Judezmo proverbial saying is also alluded to in introductory remarks such as *es ditado* ‘it is said’; for example:

“Es ditado, ‘Asegún sale el hamín i el yerno’ ‘It is said, “How one’s Sabbath stew and one’s son-in-law turn out [is a matter of luck]’” (Asa 1733: 81b)

102 Cf. *Ne verirsen onu alirsin, ekmeđi istersen ekmekçiden al*.

In introducing sayings, verbs of expression other than ‘say’, such as *responder* ‘to reply’, are also used; for example:

“*Si me responderá alguno akí ke ‘Kyen non se resyente, non vyene de djente’, le diré ...*” “If someone here replies to me that ‘One whose voice is not heard is not of respectable background’, I shall say ...” (‘Atias, *La guerta de oro*, 25a).

5. Concluding remarks

The present article has focused on some significant divergences between the terminology denoting Judezmo proverbs and sayings used by members of the Judezmo speech community, and that employed by Hispanists who have collected and studied this Sephardic folk genre. For over a century, Hispanists have analyzed Judezmo folk traditions in terms reflecting Hispanic culture and its accepted academic lexicon and categorizations. But demonstrating a cultural independence of their own, Judezmo writers today, like Baruch ‘Uzi’el in the 1920s, increasingly employ terminology and categorizations rooted in the folk traditions of the Judezmo speech community itself, for example, the denotation of the ‘proverb’ as *reflán* by Matilda Koen-Sarano, as *mashaliko* by Yehuda Hatsvi, and as *proverbo* by Dora Niyego, and of the ‘saying’ as *dicha* by all. Perhaps one day scholars too will honor the bearers of this culture by analyzing its folk genres using the terminology and categorization preferred by Judezmo speakers, thereby adhering to a fundamental principle in the study of anthropology and culture.